An Otome Game's Burikko Villainess Turned into a Magic Otaku Volume 2

Enrolment Ceremony

Chapter 1 - Q of Hearts

A small blue bird stopped at the window of my room.
I stood up, and timidly approached it… The truth is, this blue bird is not just a simple bird.
It's a type of magic communication spell.

――――What it's communicating are the "Exam Results".

I reach out with my hand, when the bird stops on the back of my right hand and turns into a piece of paper with the exam results written on it.

"It sure is scary to look."

If I failed…
Once I started thinking this, I couldn't bring myself to check what was on the paper.

"Oh? Camille-sama."

Aimée who was in the middle of giving maids cleaning instructions showed up at my room.
Aimée reigns over the maids of the Rhodolite house as the strongest attendant.

"Oh? Oh oh? This is…"

Aimée snatched the paper away from me at a speed that seemed impossible with her body, and held it out with both hands.

"My! My my! Camille-sama!"

Eh, did I fail?
My chief maid was showing me a worrying reaction.

"It seems we'll be celebrating tonight! I must inform Marquis-sama!"

After returning me the paper, Aimée left the room, her hips fluttering about.
After she was gone, I timidly took a look at the paper, and found…

That the four letters, "PASS" were written there.

"I passed!"

What do I do…? I'm so happy… Much more than when it was my high school entrance exam.

I wonder if Royce-sama and Achille passed…?
Achille is probably okay, but Royce-sama…? No, he should be better at general education that I am.
…Royce-sama, you didn't fail, right?

I want to ask, but when I consider the possibility that he failed, it's too scary so I can't send the communication magic.

"It's so hard to ask…"

Achille has probably passed, so it's fine even if I tell Achille my results, right?

In the end, after a lot of worrying about it, I sent a message spell to Achille only.

After a little while, a reply came from Achille.
It mentioned that Royce-sama passed as well.
…Royce-sama, to think that you only told Achille… You were thinking the same thing as me, weren't you? I passed as well, you know?

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The day of the entrance ceremony arrived.

The time between the announcement of the results, and the entrance ceremony, felt quicker than expected.
I heard that after the entrance ceremony there would be a chance to mingle with fellow students to deepen friendships.
Normally I'd be glad without a care about the event and all, but because it was an event held by this school, I felt a little nervousness.

Along with that incident where the magic power measurement item broke, I've been getting an incredibly bad feeling about this, after all~…
When you say a person of this world who has enough magic power to destroy a measuring item, no matter how you think about it, it's her, right?

"But that's weirddd…"

The Heroine was supposed to enrol starting in the second year.

"For her to take the exam like a normal person…"

Is there an irregular here as well?
Just like how because of Camille's influence, Royce and Achille changed.
Just like how before even the entrance ceremony, Raiger already got engaged.

Unlike in the game, the heroine's influence shouldn't change Camille's fate. It shouldn't, but…
There's not a thing, thing~, to worry about.

"She might even be a reaally good girl!"

But, my mood has gotten a little depressed.

"If the heroine chooses Royce-sama… What am I going to do?"

I might get in the way like in the game, and after all, I actually have been doing that to the other noble daughters.

"…! No way!"

I only just realised it after all this time.
I, who've been repeatedly getting in the way of the noble daughters who tried to get near Royce-sama…
Isn't that exactly Camille?

"Like this, I'll meet a Social Obliteration End!"

“The heckk are you mumbling about?”

“Achille…”

“We’re still in the middle of the entrance ceremony, you know? If you get too noisy, you’ll draw attention.”

Oh, right. I was in the middle of a solemn ceremony.
The principal is speaking in front of us. I’m a bit concerned about the fact that it completely feels like the lazily speaking principal is just getting it over with… In the game it felt like he took things more seriously, though…
Mr. Principal… Is this really okay?

While the principal was giving his address, I turned my head here and there, observing the students, but I didn’t find any female student that seemed to be the heroine.
That’s weird… Could it be that she failed the exam?
In her place, there are slightly weird characters popping up here and there…

The Q of Diamonds has turned into a beautiful crossdresser for example, and the Q of Clovers is absent… The K of Diamonds is missing too, huh… It goes without saying that the J of Spades is as well, though.
Since K, Q and J are completely gathered here, doesn’t that mean that we of the Hearts faction have the strongest influence now?

“It’s definitely weird!”

“Camille, if you kick up such a fuss… I’ll seal your mouth, you know?”

“…!”

I don’t really get it, but I sensed danger to my body, so I shut up in a panic.

Achille’s behaviour has only been escalating since that day.
We’re engaged, so that kind of contact isn’t anything weird, but I don’t think he has a need to go this far just for the spirit of friendship.

※

After the entrance ceremony ended, the socialising event began.
Because I have the stuff from before as well, Achille was tightly holding my hand. So that I wouldn’t lose concentration, he said…
Gosh, to treat a sixteen year old like a lost child that you can’t let go of!

Speaking of being sixteen, that’s an adult in this world.
It’s an age where I can even drink alcohol, you know?

The event is being held in the form of a stand-up buffet, and on top of the table are light foods and dessert.
Meeting my expectations, on a nearby table are various coloured alcoholic drinks in small cocktail glasses.
Even though the academy is an educational grounds, for them to serve alcohol… Parallel worlds sure are mysterious.

“Achille, I want to drink that.”

“Camille… Do you know what that is?”

“Alcohol, right?”

“Mmn. That’s right, but… make sure you don’t drink too much, alright?”

I’m not going to start gulping them down, you know? Achille is kinda… He’s like an overly worried mother, isn’t he?

“Here you go.”

What he handed me was a cocktail with the same raspberry colour as my eyes.

“Thanks…”

Finding something incredibly interesting about this, Achille is staring at me as I drink.

The drink he gave me was sweet and tasty, so I want a little more now.

“Ah, Camille!”

“Just a little more.”

Shaking free of Achille’s warnings, I drink a second, and then a third cocktail, when Achille starts to openly frown.

“Mmn. It really is delicious.”

“Are you really alright, drinking that much?”

“Mn, I’m completely fine, you know? At home, I’ve been stopped by Aimée, so even though I’ve come of age I’ve never drunk before you know? It turns out that I might actually be a heavy drinker, huh?”

Saying that, I turn to face Achille, but my foot got tangled and I was about to fall forward. I braced myself, but I didn’t have enough strength, so my body wouldn’t move the way I wanted.

“Huh…? Uwahh!”

At this rate, I’m guaranteed to faceplant!

“Watch out-”

Achille supported me with his arm as I was about to tumble. …We’ve ended up kind of embracing each other.

“S-, Sorry…”

I flusteredly tried to get away, but I tripped again. My sense of balance has disappeared.
Achille is looking at me, dumbfounded.

"…Even though I told you this would happen."

"I'm not drunk or anything, you know? I'm totally fine."

"That's what all drunks say… Come on, hold on."

Almost hanging off Achille, I moved a little distance away from the event place, and walked to a place with chairs. Achille has been kindly supporting me without complaints.
There are no other students near the chairs. I bet nobody else will leave the venue or anything.
…As long as they don't become like me, that is.

"Achille, sorry about this… Thanks."

Achille averted his eyes. Did I anger him? His ears are kind of red, after all.
Guilt starts to well up in me.

"I'll go get you some water, so sit here quietly, okay?"

"…Much obliged, sir."

Even though he's angry at me, he's even going to get me water. Achille is really such a good guy.

Since Achille went to bring me some water, I'm by myself now. I can't get up from the seat, so I have nothing to do. I'm not cut out for the job of sitting around quietly.
Even my head feels kinda fluffy. Achille, hurry up and come back… This is kinda bad. My head is swimming.

While I was in such a state, a single female student approached.
She was heading towards me, making a beeline. There's probably no mistake that she wants something from me.

That student looks kind of familiar. Someone I've seen on screen, again and again in the past…
Wavy, cinnamon coloured medium length hair, and olive coloured eyes…
My eyes widened.

――――She's, that game's "heroine"――――

…So she really did pass the exam?

The Heroine is glaring at me.
In her profile, it was written that she had an "ordinary appearance", but isn't she just a normal bishoujo!?
She looks gallant and neat, and makes you want to protect her.

However, this neat and tidy bishoujo accosted me in a harsh tone unthinkable from her outward appearance.

"You're a "bodyswap", right? You're not Camille Rhodolite, right?"

"Eh…"

Suddenly being asked this, I fell into turmoil.

“I wonder if Royce and Achille are just like they were in the game. Do you know what I mean by “bodyswapping”?”

I don’t recall doing anything so bad to her, but I can feel extreme hostility from her. Why? I haven’t bullied the heroine yet, though?
Or more like, why am I being cornered by her? Like me, is she a different person from the real heroine?
…No good. Because I’m drunk, my head won’t function better than usuall.
…Ahh, my stomach feels kind of bad. This is a bad sign.

“How about saying something? It’s pointless to try and hide it!”

The Heroine spoke in an even harsher tone, and pressed me for an answer. …Even though that’s out of the question right now… Even though I’m currently feeling worse and worse.

“Uu… I can’t…”

Something hot gradually rose from the depths of my throat.

“What ‘can’t’ you…? You’d best quit playing dumb! …Huh? KYAAAAAAAAAA!”

The Heroine let out a terrible shriek.

I’d magnificently thrown up the contents of my stomach, in the direction of the Heroine.
…Apologies.

Chapter 2 - Q of Diamonds

Today's the entrance ceremony.
It seems that our Baka-sama-… Ah, I mean, our Waka-sama[1], has wandered off somewhere again.
Isn't it no good for a prince to ditch the entrance ceremony?
Seriously, I wish he'd cut me a break. He's probably wandering around the school, chasing ass anyway.
Only that guy's womanising is the same as in the game.

While I was searching for Baka-sama, I was looking around and observing the other factions.
Of course, my motivations are just a pure desire to pay respects to the other characters from the otome game.
In the game, all of the characters first gathered here at this school.

The otome game that I love, 『Carte à Jouer』… For some reason or another, this world is the world of that otomege. I've played it a number of times, so there shouldn't be any mistake.
I was on the way back from university, when no sooner had I fallen into an open manhole, than I found myself in this world. I'd switched places with someone else.

Beatrix Tapas… That's my current name.
And "Beatrix" was the name of a count's daughter who appeared in the game as an enemy character.

In the game's story, she bullied, and bullied, and bullied the heroine without end; a villain to the roots.
She was a slender beauty with long, straight, black hair, harsh looking orange coloured eyes, and bright red lips that seemed like they could eat a man alive. Truly, a noble's daughter who played the role of a rival.
Since I ended up switching places with such a woman, I fell into despair.
I mean, this villain ojousama met with a miserable end, after all…

Beatrix who had fallen in love with the prince of her country had gotten in the way of his romance with the heroine, and incurred the wrath of that prince. And she received dreadful retribution from him.
The worst retribution ever; she was ordered to marry this fat, greasy, five time divorced old geezer who already had kids.
That's why the moment I became Beatrix, I began making my move.

As if I'd let things happen like the game!

For the sake of distancing myself from the Beatrix in the game, I decided to try dressing as a man, and found that it fit me perfectly. This was when I was five.
Since then, I've always lived as a crossdresser. In case the worse came to worst, I polished my swordsmanship as well, so that I could live on my own no matter what happened.
And now, I'm more popular amongst women than even the prince.

I'm beginning with observation of the Hearts faction.
How disciplined. Don't they have all thirteen members of them there? It's a huge difference from our faction.
However…

Wh-… Could that be…?
Nah, the impression they give is too different, so perhaps I've got the wrong person?
She's a pretty student with pink hair and a petite build. There's only one character with that appearance.

“Goshhhhh. Royce-sama you knowww~? Loves Camille, you seeee~ So there’s no room for a dirty looking Ugly like you, is thereee~?”

was the signature phrase of the Heart Route’s burikko rival.
Isn’t that Camille Rhodolite, the Q of Hearts who grandly landed a smashing lead at rank 1 of the “Annoying Characters” list?

But why is Camille covered all over in tattoos? Did something happen to her!?
Her clothing is considerably different from her in-game design too.
Even though Camille is supposed to be a bishoujo who suited her goth loli fashion outfits, why the heck is that girl wearing a mantle that could be a magician’s uniform…? It’s way too plain!

And the Spades faction. For a while now, the K of Spades Raiger Transbaal, and Mei Zakro have been meeting their eyes meaningfully from time to time. It’s almost as though they’re lovers… Even though Mei was supposed to be a rival character as well.
Or more like, I was a Raiger fan too… For him to be unavailable as a love interest from the start… I want to cry…

As for the Clovers faction, there’s nobody except for the K of Clovers, but…? Where’d the Q and J go?

I know that the Diamonds faction has diverged from its time in the game.
I made it that way to avoid my Bad End after all. I accidentally went a bit far, and even ended up changing the feel of the love interest character, the K of diamonds.
But still, this is… A lot of things are way too crazy. There’s no doubt that there are causes other than me.

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“Beatrix-sama, today you look gallant as well~”

“How dreamy. Compared to Beatrix-sama, average men are less than weeds.”

The girls from the Diamonds faction called out to me.
We’re girls born from the same nation.
The Diamonds faction’s strength comprises the students and rich children of nations other than the Garnet Nation’s.
It sounds good, but this school takes the nobles of the Garnet Nation too lightly, huh? For the Garnet Nation’s nobles of the King Faction and Royal Prince Faction alone to account for twenty six people… So unfair.
Even though the Diamonds faction all together only has thirteen people!

“Huhu, thank you. Such lovely ojousans… I’m a lucky person, aren’t I?”

“Aahh! Beatrix-sama!”

Overcome with emotions, the girls’ eyes moistened with tears. I’ve become completely established as a crossdressing character, haven’t I? Well, it’s amusing though so it’s fine.

When I happened to shift my gaze… I happened upon a pink head by a far off table.
Isn’t that Camille from earlier?

She’s gulping down large amounts of alcohol. Even if they’re cocktails-, no, precisely because they’re cocktails, I have a bad feeling about this.

Isn't the person standing next to her the J of Hearts, Achille Jade? For that Achille to be taking care of Camille like that, at a time like this… Maybe I should try visiting an eye doctor just once.
Achille is supposed to hate Camille, who follows his lord around like a housefly.
I mean, in the ending where the heroine gets together with the K of Hearts, it's by Achille's hands that Camille was socially obliterated, and was forced into a life of misery.
But despite that, why do they look like they're getting along so well…? What a mystery.

At that moment, I discovered a person who looked like our Baka-sama behind the hedge.
You ditched the entrance ceremony to hide in a place like that? I thought he was picking up girls, but he's chatting friendlily with the prince of our neighbouring nation, the K of Hearts.
Ah-, he looked this way.

"Bea-chin! So here you were~"

After waving to the prince of the neighbouring nation, Baka-sama walked in my direction.

"I should be asking you, Waka-sama, where did you go during the entrance ceremony? I was sure that you were flirting with girls in the academy's neighbourhood, but…"

"I wasn't, you know~? I was in the infirmary."

"Were you always so delicate?"

"It's fineee, it's fineee, Bea-chin, you sure are serious, huh~ You sure worry about the details, huh~ You sure act like a sister-in-law, huh~"

Seriously, why did this prince grow up into such a useless guy…? Even though he was a high-spec'd, popular prince in the game.
Is it because I've been spoiling him? By now he has no intentions of opposing the first prince at all.

I was trying too hard in trying to avoid danger to myself, that I greatly exceeded the abilities of the in-game Beatrix. Enough that I serve the second prince as a single knight.
On the contrary, because I've been trying too hard at avoiding becoming enemies with this prince, each year the prince falls further into the mindset that even if he doesn't do something himself, I'll do all the work for him.
Since then, for every single thing, Baka-sama has been relying on me, and fawning on me.

I… ended up becoming a massively bad influence for this prince.

Translator Notes

1. waka-sama = young master
   Normally it'd be my policy to translate it as 'young master', but that doesn't rhyme with baka-sama. And I can't think of any word for idiot that would rhyme with 'young master' exactly either, so yeah.

Chapter 3 - J of Hearts

"Uuuun, uuuun…"

From inside a futon came a groan that seemed to crawl along the ground, unmatching with the clear and sunny entrance day,
The owner of that voice was, of course, Camille. This idiot did something quite grand on the first day of school.

Regarding Camille's vomit that seemed to have been regurgitated due to a stomach forced to drink too much… When I came back with the water, it was completely cleaned up with magic.

And… there, all that remained was a school girl noisily making a shrill fuss, and Camille whose mouth was frothing.

"Hey! This isn't something that can be dropped just because you cleaned it up with magic, you know."

The school girl was indignant for some reason.

"Uuun, uuu… Guu…"

"Wake up! After splashing that kind of thing on me, do you think you'll get away scot-free? What are you going to do if a smell remains!?"

From those words, I could more or less guess what had happened.

"It's alright… Just that side has been reverted in time by magic, so… Uu-…. Uuu…n, like it never happened… "

. .

"Camille, are you alright? Here, I brought you water, okay?"

"Achille… Thank… Uu…"

After getting drunk, she was probably feeling bad. It'd be better if I brought her to a place she could lie down, huh.

"Achille Jade!"

The girl that got tangled up with Camille, suddenly shouted my name… What I don't know any woman like this.

"…That's me, but?"

"Why is Achille taking care of someone like Camille?"

"I don't quite understand but, right now I'd like to carry her to an infirmary, so please excuse me. As for what my fiancée did, please seek your apology another day."

"Fiancée you said? Why the heck are you two engaged?"

I'm the one who wants to do the questioning. Why do I have to explain myself to you?

"Because, Achille… should have been the one to push Camille into ruin."

"What kind of nonsense are you…?"

Having spoken that far, I suddenly remember a certain matter. The word "ruin"… I've heard it somewhere…

――――"For someone who's going to ruin me… Don't treat me so kindly…"――――

When was that again? …There was a time when Camille herself had said something like that.
Nah, it's probably a coincidence. At the time, Camille was still young, and the situation being what it was, she was probably just quite confused.
It has nothing to do with this woman's words.

"Achille hates Camille, you know?"

"I will listen to what you have to say at some other date."

Camille was now feeling too sick to move, so I picked her up in my arms.
The schoolgirl was still kicking up a fuss about something, but I let her be and brought Camille to the infirmary.

When I opened the door to the infirmary, nobody was inside. It was awkward because the infirmary doctor had apparently gone off somewhere.

"Camille, are you still feeling nauseous?"

"…I pheel bhad. Bud… I threw ub earlier, so ids okey."

A marquis' daughter who gets drunk on an entrance ceremony… It's disappointing, but I'm already used to it. It's Camille here, so it can't be helped.
I treasure her, that aspect of her included, after all.

"Achille… Sorry."

Camille who was lying on the bed was looking up at me apologetically.
Aahh, if you look up at me with those moist eyes… things will get bad, in various ways. Even though I want to look directly at her, I can't, so I immediately shifted my gaze.

"It's okay to sleep. I'll be here until the infirmary nurse gets here."

"Mn… Thanks. Huhu, this is just like that time, huh?"

"Which time?"

"In the past, when I was brought to the castle after being stabbed… you nursed me, Achille."

It seems that she's talking about the time we went to the castle town with His Highness.

"Yeah."

“Otousama was really busy as well, so he couldn’t come visit… But because you were there, I felt reassured.”

“Camille… Saying that right now should be foul play, right?”

My face is hot…
Calm down, me. What are you going to do if you take a drunkard’s babble seriously? You’ll just end up heartbroken like usual, you know?
Ahh, but still…

“Achille…”

Camille started to fall asleep. Because of her condition as well, it’d be better for her to sleep right now.
I immediately began to hear her soft sleeping breath.

“I love you, Camille.”

Of course, Camille didn’t react. She was sound asleep.
Unable to bear it, I gave her a single kiss on the face.

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“I saw that, Achille.”

Suddenly, I heard a voice I knew well, and stiffened. When I looked in the direction of the voice, I found His Highness peeking in from the gap in the infirmary door.
His Highness and peeping… It’s a combo that doesn’t go well together.

“Is Camille alright? I heard that she drank a lot, but…”

It seems that ugly stories of Camille are spreading with certainty.

“She’s fine. She fell asleep just now.”

“Achille… Even if you do that to her while she’s asleep, there’s no meaning, right?”

“…That’s fine.”

“It’s not, right? Have you properly told her that you like her? If you don’t give it to her straight, Camille won’t notice, you know? Even though it’d be questionable even after giving it to her straight, you…”

“Hahh…”

I know that. But I don’t want to force her into that kind of relationship by telling her this.
No, that’s not it. I’m simply afraid of destroying the relationship that we have now.
Camille distancing herself from me in shock, would be unbearable.
I’m not so great a person that I’d be able to silently watch as she left me. It seems more like I’d forcefully keep her tied to me… While I think that I’d like to be sincere with her, at the same time I can picture myself using various ways to keep her with me… I can’t move forward nor backward.

The point is that because of my cowardice, I’m putting off the problem. His Highness has seen through me.

“I’m cheering for you two.”

“Hahh…”

“Geez, I’ve been watching for a number of years now, but it can’t be helped that I’m feeling impatient now.”

“Hahh… But even if you say that, Your Highness, I-”

“The second prince of the neighbouring country… doesn’t seem to have given up, you know? On the contrary, it looks like he’s quite interested in Camille.”

“Even though Camille is engaged to me”

“That an engagement is something that can be overturned, is something that you should know better than I do, right?”

The difference in status between the illegitimate son of a viscount, and the prince of a large nation is too huge. Yeah, I don’t have a chance, do I?

“I don’t want to give Camille to another nation. She’s my important magician, after all.”

Whether for good or for bad, His Highness has grown as a prince. Even though he used to be a frankly gentle person.
However, once I consider that I might have contributed to this via my bad influence on His Highness, I feel a little guilty.

“Mmmn… One more drink.”

I could hear sleeptalk coming from Camille. It looks like this idiot hasn’t learnt her lesson yet, so I’ll have to warn her later.

“Geez. Camille likes drinking that much, huh?”

Because he didn’t see what happened today, His Highness is smiling, but this isn’t something to laugh about, okay?

“It would be better not to give Camille alcohol anymore. It seems that she’s the type who’s immediately affected by alcohol, after all.”

“Hm~mm. A drunk who cutely fawns on you, and slurs her words… If Camille was like that, then it’d be fine, but as expected of her, I guess.”

Ah-, I thought that too. But since it’s Camille, it can’t be helped.

Translator Notes

1. Would like to note that in Japan, instead of saying “you, you”, you can replace you with their name. Let’s say your name is slumberknight, and I am now addressing you directly.

   It would not be weird at all to say “slumberknight-san. Which juice did slumberknight-san pick?” or “slumberknight-san said that slumberknight-san would pick up the chicken, so why do I have to?”

At the same time, this means that the way the Heroine speaks could also be taken as referring to the character from the game, rather than the person she's speaking to. Even more so because she uses no honorifics with the names, which is more than a little blunt considering they don't know each other.

For this reason, I have left things the way they would be in Japanese, even though I would normally replace them with 'you'.

First Year First Semester

Chapter 4 - Q of Hearts

Why do the places called 'school' all love exams so much?
Even though it was right after taking the entrance exams, as soon as we started out the semester, we were given some incomprehensible "First Test".

My results?
You want to know? You really want to know…?

"Camille, this isn't the time to be spacing out, know you? You're taking the supplementary exam, aren't you?"

Ruthlessly, my fiancé disclosed my current situation.
Achille, you bastard, why do you know my results? And moreover, you even know about the supplementary exam! Each and every time, just where does this childhood friend of mine get his information from?

"God, I've already gotten into the school, so general education is just unnecessarryyy!"

"…If your marks are too bad, you might get expelled you know?"

"My magic exam schools are good, so it's okay!"

. .

"…If you pass the supplementary exams, as a reward I'll buy you the newest edition of the magic items dictionary, you know?"

"The new edition of the magic items dictionary!? The one that's super hard to get a hold of?"

"I have a connection."

"Achille-sama! Please let me try my best!"

"Well then, let's go to the library. Right now."

I obediently nodded, and was brought to the library by Achille.
We passed through a hallway on the way that had the top 10 achievers names posted up. …I'm really glad that they don't post up the names of those who need supplementaries.
Hatefully, Achille is the top of the whole general course for the test.
Third place for the magic exam as well, and altogether number one… As expected, he's become higher spec than when he was in a game. Royce-sama has reasonably good results too.

I'm number one for the magic exam, but all of my general curriculum subjects were fails, so my combined results were tragic.
There's one more person who tied top in the magic exam but… it was somebody unexpected. Just like me, they smacked out a perfect result. I didn't expect that they would be magically inclined though…

"You can do it if you try, Camille."

"Even if you say that…"

“For a while there’ll be less work, so of course you’ll be putting that time into studying, right?”

“Yeah, but…”

Despite the library being quite large, there were few people.
The whole student body comprises fifty or sixty people, so you can tell just how many people need to study right this instant.
During this period, there’s no demand for a library.

“Camille, let’s go sit over there.”

Achille and I took up seats in a corner, far away from the reception. It’s a place that makes it difficult for the other students to see us.
It seems to be Achille’s own way of showing concern by making sure my exam failure isn’t exposed to the other students. Or it could be that he doesn’t want people to know that his fiancée failed.

“Okay, open up your textbook!”

“Uuu…”

For the sake of the new edition of the magic item dictionary, I have no choice but to study.
I gathered my determination, and opened up the massive textbook. First up is the subject that I’m less bad at, the history of this nation.
History sure is hard to remember, huh? There are too many people with the same name. Back when I was in high school as well, there were all these Fujiwaras and Tokugawas, so I had a hard time…

“Camille, for this question…”

Achille began explaining to me. His explanations are really easy to understand, so once I’ve heard it once, I won’t make a mistake a second time.
It’d be nice if I went through things with him each time I learnt something new, but getting lost in my magic research and job, before I knew it, the day of the exam had come.

“Achille, you’re close.”

“If I don’t sit closer, I won’t be able to teach you, right?”

“But…”

How do I say this? Isn’t he kind of sticking too closely to me? Last time when we studied, I don’t think he was this close, but…
I mean, his left hand! Achille’s left hand is on my waist…

“Camille, are you listening? Look, you aren’t concentrating at all.”

“I am listening, you know? Your lessons are easy to remember… They’re Spartan, though.”

But I might not be able to concentrate…
No good, if I fail this supplementary exam as well, I’ll end up stuck with supplementary lessons.
Won’t the precious time I have to enjoy magic get cut down? Already, I’m cutting down my work time for my studies…

I don’t want my work time to get cut down. When I talked to Aimée about this before entering school,

she looked at me with slightly disapproving eyes, and said “You sure are father and daughter, aren’t you?”.
I asked Otousama to increase my workload, but I was rejected… It looks like I have no choice but to put effort into my studies.

Achille is quite patient, and is willing to teach me. He’s cutting down his own free time.
Even someone like me feels sorry about that.

“Achille… I’ll pay you back for this later, okay? You’re always helping me with my studies, so I’m quite grateful to you.”

“There’s no need to thank me. After all, looking after you isn’t something that started just now.”

He’s completely right… I’m feeling exceedingly sorry about all this.

“I don’t hate being alone together with you like this, you know?”

“But because of that, time spent on yourself is getting cut down.”

“This is time spent on myself though…”

“As if that’s the case!”

“You’re not the one who gets to decide that, Camille. I’m the one who gets to choose what to do with my time, after all.”

Today, Achille is being overbearing in various ways.

“Uuu…”

There’s no choice.
I’ve given up. If we end up arguing, somebody like me has no chance of beating Achille.

※

“Phewww, it’s over~!”

Somehow or other I managed to get through the material for all the subjects in the supplementaries. After this, all I need to do is review the material by myself.
The night is already about to begin, and it’s pitch black outside the window. There’s nobody left except the library staff.

“You sure tried hard. With this, you’re fine for your supplementaries.”

“Mn, thank you Achille. You really saved me… Supplementary lessons wouldn’t be funny.”

“That’s right, it wouldn’t be funny. If your time got taken up by something like that, I’d be bothered after all.”

“Eh…”

“As for the pay back that you mentioned, is it okay if I make a request?”

"…? Of course."

Suddenly, Achille who was sitting in the seat next to me forcefully pulled me over with the left hand he had wrapped around my waist, and hugged me.

"Fuwah-? Eh-? Achille?"

What's going on? For him to suddenly cling to me… This hasn't happened even once before.

"Camille… I like you."

Heh? L-L-L-L-L-L-L-L-L-L-L-L-L-L-L-L-L-L-L-Like? 'Like' as in that like? That one? Not this one? He doesn't mean this 'like', but that 'like', right?
E-, Even I've had a boyfriend before in my past life, okay!? We broke up in just two weeks, though. We did nothing but hold hands, though!
But I at least have enough ability to distinguish which "like" he means, okay?
This is the "Affection Plus Friendship"-type "like". …Right?

"Umm… Achille, this…"

Achille's cobalt eyes are narrowed lustfully and peering in on my face. What does he mean to do by turning on his passion on me at full force? Use it somewhere else.

"Like I said, I'm claiming my reward."

I see! So Achille is taking a non-physical reward out of kindness. Then just this time, I'll take him up on his words.

"If it's just this, you can hug me as much as you want, you know? I don't think that hugging someone like me is anything near enough of a thank you, though."

"…"

Achille has bcome quiet, still hugging me. He looks kind of discouraged… Why?
So he really is dissatisfied with someone like me as repayment? Even though he should have just done something like this whenever he wanted.

"Umm, Achi-…"

"Even though I already told you that I was fine with you. Even though I said that I liked you… Why won't you believe me?"

"…Heh?"

For some reason, Achille is in a bad mood.

"How many times do I have to confess before you're happy? Why do you immediately write things off with the words "someone like me"?"

"Because, that's-"

"There's no way that I'd help a girl each and every time with her studies if I didn't like her, right?

Camille, just what on earth do you think I am?"

A saintly childhood friend with deep feelings of friendship. Was that wrong?

"Camille, you're too dull. I thought that you were gradually noticing, but you're showing no signs of noticing at all…"

I started feeling awkward, and clumsily averted my eyes. I don't know what kind of face to make. I mean, it's Achille, you know?
Up until now, I've shown him all my worthless and pathetic parts. I can guarantee that I've worn him out.

"I got engaged to you because I like you, and those feelings haven't changed even now."

"No way…"

"Even if I'm your fiancé, if you don't want to then I won't do anything, okay? Your feelings take preference, and… Or so I was thinking, but I'm sick of doing nothing but waiting. I've reached my limit. There are rude bastards who are trying to take you from the side too, after all."

I couldn't really hear the second half, but Achille telling me that he likes me in that way is… I somehow understand. I ended up understanding.
Which means that all the kindness up until now was for that reason as well? Helping me with studying today as well…

"Holy crap…"

"…That's my line. How long do you think this took?"

"You have bad taste huh, Achille?"

"Seriously."

I can tell that my blood is rushing to my face. My face is probably redder than it's ever been. If I didn't insult him, I don't think I'd be able to stand from the embarassment. With my face still hanging, I'm frozen like a statue.
Even if I try to run, Achille is tightly holding onto my whole body.

"Camille."

He slowly called out my name. In a voice that's sweeter than I've ever heard it.
What is this? It's earthshatteringly embarassing, you know?

"Raise your face?"

"N-, No way!"

My face is absolutely red right now. As if I'd show such a pathetic face to this guy!

But my resistance was futile, and my chin was forcefully raised by Achille's hand.

"Let go… -!"

"Huhu… Your face is red."

Achille's expression looks incredibly happy. Is my pathetic face that amusing?
So cruel!

"Gee-… Stop, that's embarassing."

"It looks like… I have a bit of a chance, huh? Right, Camille?"

As if I'd know! Please, just give me a break already, and stop looking at my face!

It's no good, I'm at my limit. I don't think I can bear this nauseatingly sweet mood anymore. Alright, let's escape!

"T-, that's right! I suddenly remembered something incredibly important that I have to attend to!"

I began speaking in a loud voice.

"…Hm~m?"

Achille is grinning. Damnit, in psychological warfare, I have no way of winning at all.

"If it's something important, then it can't be helped, huh? I'll walk you to your room."

"Umm, I can go by myself, so… Let's part here."

"I'll walk you to your room."

He's pushing it with a smile. There's no need to get into work mode in a place like this, so geez!

In the end, it was impossible to disrupt Achille's pace, and because there was arguing, I let him see me to my room.

Author's Note: The tables have turned.

Chapter 5 - Q of Hearts (Part 2)

Huhhuhhu.
I'm unusually overflowing with confidence. This is because I solved the problems in the supplementary exam more easily than expected.
I think it's likely that I'll pass all my subjects.

"What's this, what's this~? Camille, you're confident? How nice~, I might end up with supplementary lessons."

The one who spoke to me was the K of Diamonds, Tria. He's also taking the supplementary exam.
Unlike in the game, the Tria of this world seems to be completely bad at all studies.
However, in magic potions class alone, he's doing well, as he consistently produces high quality potions it seems.

"I think I'll probably pass. Tria-sama, do your best in the supplementary classes, okay?"

"Aahh, even though I thought you'd be a comrade in supplementary classes! You traitor~!"

Did I seem like I'd be your supplementary class comrade? But wow, what a shameful comrade to be. I'm fine with being a traitor.

"Sorryy."

"Aahh, I've lost my willpower. Camille, come accompany this pitiful me for some tea… Console meee!"

"Don't wanna. I'm about to head back to the dorm and read the『Magic Items Dictionary – Newest Edition』after all."

"Don't say that."

"I refuse."

. .

"I'll treat you to magic tea that you can't find outside Topageria."

I ended up reacting to those words.

"Magic tea? What's that?"

"It's been spreading around in my home country recently. A special tea. It's a healthy tea made with a magic plant as the base, and depending on the magic plant used, there are various effects and…"

"I want to try drinking it!"

There shouldn't be a tea like that in our nation. If it has the word 'magic' in it, then there's no way I can afford to decline.

"Yesss! Now that that's decided, let's head to my room."

“Let’s go, let’s go~”

Tria’s room was on the top floor of the Diamonds faction’s dorm.
At this school, each faction has their own dorm. In the game, the four factions had a terrible relationship with each other, so it was an appropriate decision.

But despite that, I, the Q of Hearts, am stepping foot into the enemy territory that is the Diamonds’ dorm… This is so strange.
My relationship with Tria isn’t bad.
But looking at our nations, I can’t say that our kings get along with each other. It’s a relationship where they act like they get along, while probing each other out.

“Ah-, it’s Camille-sama.”

“Welcome to our Diamonds class’ dorm.”

It seems that the Diamonds class is friendly with me for some reason. It’s a welcoming atmosphere.

“…Thank you. I’ll be imposing.”

I got on the magic circle in the lobby that acted like an elevator, and headed to the top floor.
Overall, the Diamonds dorm has a lot of Arabian-esque decorations. It seems that the influence of the neighbouring Topageria is strong.
Tria’s room was no exception, and everything in there brought about an Arabian atmosphere.

“For now, sit down?”

“M-, Mmn.”

Tria pointed at a splendorous sofa.
The truth is, I’ve actually never been anywhere besides Achille’s house, and the castle where Royce-sama lives, so I was quite nervous coming here.
Royce-sama and Achille; Déborah, Désirée and Mei… My social circle is basically just them.
Tria is my first friend since entering the academy.

After he gave directions to his maid who followed him from Topageria, he sat down opposite me.

“I’m having the magic tea brought over, so wait just a little.”

“Thanks.”

While I was waiting excitedly for the magic tea, Tria stood up and approached me.

“What?”

“Hey, hey, show me your magic tattoos, Camille. The magicians in Topageria don’t use tattoos, so I’m interested.”

During the entrance exams as well, Tria showed interest in my automatic defence magic tattoos.
Speaking of which, none of the kids in the Diamonds faction have tattoos, do they? Even in the Hearts faction, only one or two of the boys have them though.
I wonder if they simply don’t have that kind of culture.

“That’s fine. What type of magic is mainstream in Topageria?”

“Mmmm… Rather than mainstream… We’re not really a nation that uses magic as much as Garnet does, you see. In exchange, our magic items and magic potions are enriched, even moreso than Garnet, you know?”

“I see.”

“If there’s an item you want, just tell me. I can get most things, after all.”

“Really?”

It’s quite a generous offer.

“Of course, if it’s your request, Camille. By the way, what’s that tattoo? I’ve never seen one with a butterfly pattern, but…”

“It’s a boost to floating, and you use it when you’re flying on a broom. It’s a design I thought up myself, you know.”

“Ahh, by broom, you mean like that time at the entrance exam, huh. It’s quite a weird magic, isn’t it? I wonder if I could use it too…”

“Would you like to try? I don’t think it’s that difficult.”

“Seriously!? I’d be super happy, you know.”

At the same time Tria leaned forward happily, a knock came at the door.

“Waka-sama, I’ve brought the tea.”

The door opened with a clack, and a tall student entered the room.

The person who entered the room noticed me, and smiled at me.
This person is the Q of Diamonds… isn’t she? I’m a little nervous.
At any rate, in the game Beatrix had an incredibly harsh personality.
The day that I get seen together alone with Tria, I’ll be called out to the back yard for sure.

“Ah, grazie, Bea-chin.”

Bea-chin? Ah-, as in the “Bea” in “Beatrix” maybe?
But this Beatrix… I wondered about this during the entrance ceremony as well, but just why is she wearing men’s clothing?
She waved her hand as though in reply to Tria’s thanks, and prepared tea and sweets on the table. Somehow, the polish of her movements is pretty cool.

“But still~, Camille, you really are the best, aren’t you?”

“I wonder about that.”

It’s the first time I’ve been told this, though… Usually I just get called a pervert, or Tattoo Woman, after all.

"You are! It's not easy to find a magician of your skill, you know? I'd definitely want you to come to Topageria, and spread your knowledge of magic through our country. As my wife."

Waitwait, I have a job in Garnet, and… Hang on.

"Huh? Waif?"

Just now, I feel like I heard a weird word mixed in.

"Right. Hmm? Could it be that it didn't reach you, Camille?"

"…What are you talking about?"

"Mmmmn, that's weirddd. The Rhodolite Marquis family said that they received our message, though."

"Tria-sama?"

"You see, I applied for a marriage. With you."

"Heh? When?"

"Right after the dance party… It seems like the message didn't reach you thoughhh."

"B-, But I'm already engaged to Achille, you see."

"But I mean, with my authority, I'd be able to do something about it, you seeee."

At that moment, a shadow crossed my eyes at an astonishing speed.

"You stupid kiddd! What the hell are you thinking, making a move on a girl with a fiancé!? If a horse doesn't kick you, I will!"[1]

Beatrix who was standing to the side after she was done with the tea and sweets, had run over at an astounding speed, and smacked Tria in the head.

"It huuurts! Bea-chin, what are you doing!? This is abuse of a prince!"

"Shut up, damnit."

Beatrix? She wasn't this sort of character, right…?

"Owow… I mean, aren't you only engaged in a strategic marriage?"

"…That's-"

A little earlier, I would have declared "Right." without hesitation.
However, since that day in the library when Achille helped me study, I've noticed his feelings. It's already difficult to say that this is purely a marriage of convenience.
I can't simply affirm it. Not only that, I…

I… What am I supposed to reply with?

Translator Notes

1. To be kicked by a horse（馬に蹴られる）、means to get in the way of somebody else's romance, whether intentionally or not.

Chapter 6 - Q of Hearts (Part 3)

When my words wouldn't come out, unexpectedly, it was Beatrix that gave me a lifeboat.

"Waka-sama, Camille-sama must also have her own circumstances. Impatient men end up hated, you know. …Camille-sama, please help yourself to the tea. This time we've prepared a variety of magic tea that's relatively easier to drink."

"Thanks."

I held the magic tea in my mouth. It was a refreshing tea with the faint scent of flowers. Just like Beatrix said, it was easy to drink.

"It's delicious."

When I said that, Beatrix smiled happily.

"It's just a slight effect, but that tea contains the ability to reduce weariness and help replenish magic power."

Mana recovery is something to be grateful for. Especially to those in my line of work.
To a magician, running out of magic power is a troubling problem. Magicians who run out of magic power while on the job will suddenly collapse and become bedridden for three days.
My magic tattoos have the effect of optimising mana consumption, but even then, there's no way I can use magic without using any magic power at all.

"Ah, that's right. Waka-sama, after your tea time is done, would it be fine if I borrowed Camille-sama for a little while?"

"Why? Today I was the one who invited Camille, thoughh?"

"You don't have that much free time, correct? Were not the results of your supplementary exam quite poor?"

"Donnnn't waaaannnaaaa! I'm about to talk to Camille about lots of different things."

Tria took my hand. But. Beatrix mercilessly smacked his hand away.
…Scary.

"Please be silent! Did His Majesty not say that if you failed again, you would be forcefully repatriated?"

"Uuu…"

"His Majesty gave you permission to study abroad based on the reason that you would be "trying hard at studies", you know?"

Beatrix has no mercy with Tria. As expected, even Tria doesn't seem to be able to refute her.

"Tria-sama, you were in such a bad situation? Wouldn't it be better if you studied?"

"Camille! But today was…"

“Waka-sama. If you obtain over 80% in the exam at the end of the supplementary lessons, His Highness may well reconsider, you know? We’ve discussed this… Now then, what will you do, Waka-sama?”

Tria was agonising over it. Unwilling to overlook this gap, Beatrix pressed him further.

“Just by getting over 80% in the supplementary lesson’s final test, you’ll be able to escape from repatriation.”

“Uuuuu…”

“Waka-sama.”

“I get it! All I need is 80% right? I’ll do it!”

“That’s the spirit!”

“Sorry Camille, even though I invited you here. I’ll definitely make up for this!”

Said Tria, as he grasped my two hands apologetically, before leaving the room, his accessories jingly and jangly all the while.

※

“We-ll-then. The noisy one has left the room now, hasn’t he…? Camille-sama, I’d like to have a little chat with you, so would that be all right?”

Beatrix who had referred to the prince of her own country as “the noisy one” turned to me.
Going by the conversation earlier, it seems that she has some business with me.

“Eh-, mn. Go ahead?”

I timidly replied to her.

“I shall go straight to the point. Are you, like me, …a person from a different world?”

“…-!”

Beatrix was looking straight at me.
I was thinking that she was very different from the in-game Beatrix, and it seems that she too was someone who was thrown into this world.

Now then, how should I answer.
Would it be better if I just honestly revealed everything, or should I hide anything that she doesn’t already know?
She’s from the Diamonds faction; an enemy force, as it were.

“The original Camille Rhodolite wouldn’t have gotten into something like an engagement with Achille Jade. Her magic was also not as good as yours. She was a woman who did nothing other than chase Royce-sama about… Though, similarly, I too am very far from the original Beatrix Tapas.”

She began telling me about herself.
About how she was originally a Japanese university student, and after falling into a manhole, she came

to this world. About how she knew that this game was that of an otome game, and she had completely cleared that game…
About how the result of her efforts so that she didn't end up with the same fate as Beatrix was that the situation around her became very different from how it was in the game, and in particular how she had an influence on Tria.

She revealed everything to me, without hiding a thing.
Moved by her sincerity, I felt like being frank about my circumstances as well.

"I see. I'm like you… somebody who came from another world. I fell down the emergency stairs at high school, and I ended up as the three year old Camille in this game world…"

"I knew it!"

Beatrix hugged me. I can smell a gentle and faint musk perfume on her.

"Whoa…!"

"Sorry, I was just too happy… Once I thought that it wasn't just me."

Without being able to tell anyone anything, in order to twist her fate, she fought a lonely battle.
In comparison, I've been living a very comfortable life…
There was also a period when I couldn't accept this world, but after that, I did whatever I wanted to master magic, and ended up where I am now.
Royce-sama isn't avoiding me, and Achille became my fiancé. I'm on good terms with my father as well.

"It's not just me, you know? I probably know of two other people who came from another world."

"Who is it? Could it be the Q of Clovers who failed the exam?"

"No, I don't know that person… Also, you don't have to use keigo with me, you know? In our original worlds, you're my elder after all."

"…Well then, as long as we aren't in public, I'll take you up on your offer… If it's not the Q of Clovers, then who?"

"The Heroine, and probably the Q of Spades is the same as us. …It looks like the Q of Spades doesn't have any knowledge of the game, though. I think that she might have come to this world at quite a young age."

"The Heroine is here too? Even though it's only the first year… She's supposed to enter next year, right?"

"Right. But she was at the event held after the entrance ceremony. She asked me "Are you a bodyswapper?". It looked like she also knew about Royce-sama and Achille."

"That means… there's a good chance that she's a person who's played the game, doesn't it? What kind of girl is the Heroine?"

"…I don't really know."

At the time, the Heroine had probably wanted to say something. Because of the alcohol, my memories

are a bit fuzzy, you know?

“I see. It seems that you’re not on good terms with the Heroine, huh?”

“If it’s Mei-chan, then it’s good terms, you know? …When Raiga-sama isn’t with her, I might be able to lure her out.”

“Ah-!”

When I brought up Raiga’s name, Beatrix suddenly had a huge reaction.

“Raiga? That’s right, what kind of relationship do Mei and Raiga have? At the entrance ceremony, they seemed very close, but…”

“The two of them are engaged, you see.”

“No way! …So the two of them really are together? He’s already impossible as a love interest…?”

I wonder why, but it looks like Beatrix has received quite the shock.
Could it be that she’s a Raiga fan?
In that case, there’s no mistake that it’d be a shock. I mean, if it were me, and the moment I met Royce-sama in this world, he already had something like a fiancée, I’d probably be intensely depressed.

“By the way, Beatrix. At the entrance ceremony, I didn’t spot the J of Diamonds, but is he at this school?”

“A-, ahh… J huh? He’s supposed to be in the same faction, but I’ve never met him before. He hasn’t entered the school either.”

Perhaps because she was still under the shock from before, Beatrix was quite shaken.

“He’s not here? At this school?”

The J of Diamonds lived in Topageria, and was the son of a merchant that did business all over the world. Of course, he was super rich.
In the game, he was a character that gave the feeling of a generous older brother who was good at looking after others.

“So the Q of Clovers, the J of Diamonds, as well as the J of Spades aren’t at the school, huh…?”

It’s already something impossible to predict.

“”Y-, You’re right… It’s become something strange, huh?”

Ever since we spoke about Raiga and Mei, Beatrix hasn’t really been paying attention.

“Beatrix?”

“…Sorry.”

“Shall I try speaking to Mei-chan?”

“Would that be all right?”

“Mn. Mei-chan is a good girl after all. I’m sure she’ll say okay.”

Because Otome Game Comrades in the same situation have increased, I’m feeling reassured as well.
To me, becoming friendly with Beatrix was a huge gain.

※

After I left Tria’s room to head back to my dorm, I found Achille standing in front of my door.
The way he’s standing… looks a bit like this statue I saw long ago, doesn’t it? Right! It was the Niou statue!

“Camille, where were you, until an hour like this?”

After the supplementary exam, school had finished, and after that I went to play at the Diamonds dorm, so I ended up returning to the dorm late.
It’s already time to sleep. I might have needlessly worried Achille.

While unlocking the lock to my room, I answered Achille.

“Where? Um, to the Diamonds dorm, but?”

“The Diamonds dorm? What were you doing at such a place?”

For a moment, Achille looked shocked.

“I went to play at Tria’s, and got friendly with Beatrix.”

“Camille…”

Hmm? Achille seems kind of weird.

“Achille, why…-”

“Come here for a minute!”

Achille grabbed my hand, and brought us into my room himself.

“What? This is my room, but… You can’t sleep, so you want to play trumps?”

“…Camille, you really don’t have even a little sense of wariness, do you?”

“Wariness? Did some incident happen or something?”

“That’s not what I mean. Camille, you have too little wariness towards men… If you go wandering about by yourself, moreover, following a guy into his room at this hour, what are you going to do if something happens?”

“Nothing happened you know, we just ate cake and drank magic tea. It might be the stronghold of the Diamonds faction, but something like what you’re worrying about…”

“Camille, that isn’t what I’m talking about.”

Suddenly, Achille closed the distance between us.

“What I’m worried about, is this kind of thing, you know?”

With another step, Achille drew in towards me.

“Achille?”

I unconsciously backpedalled, but behind me was a wall.
Achille placed both of his hands on the wall around my face, and closed me in. Achille was in a position where he was peering directly into my face. Isn’t this, what’s commonly known as a KabeDON…?
Won’t this end up once again like that sweet atmosphere from a while ago?

“Even though you’ve got me, a fiancé, what are you going to do if after wandering about and following some other guy around, you get this done to you?”

“…-”

Achille is way too close! Even if I try to escape, there are no openings though…
What do I do? What do I say? I’m just flustered, and a good idea won’t come to mind.

“Umm… Achille, umm-”

“Hey, Camille? I’m not as tolerant as you are, so I wouldn’t be able to overlook my fiancée’s cheating.”

Achille came even closer, and he’s already at a distance where I can feel his breath.

“Ch-, Cheating?”

What kind of incomprehensible stuff is he talking about?
Even though all I did was enjoy myself to some magic tea, and didn’t do anything to feel guilty about…

For a while now, Achille hasn’t taken his cobalt eyes off of mine.
Perhaps because of nervousness, my heart is beating like a hammer. Why does my heart have to beat so quickly like this? I’m innocent!
The moment I thought to refute with this, Achille moved his face even closer…
…His lips, softly touched mine.

“Nn-…”

I-, Is this a… k-, k-k-k-k-, a kiss?
The rebuttal I came up with has completely disappeared from my head. Holy crap!
After Achille slowly parted his lips from mine, his eyes narrowed in satisfaction.

“Goodnight, Camille. If you’ve learned your lesson with this, next time be more careful, okay?”

Leaving me still frozen up against the wall, Achille left my room.
What the heck was that?

After being released from the tension I had all that time, with my hands still over my lips, I slid helplessly to the ground.
Even though Achille has already left, my heart is still pounding away.

Translator Notes

1. I know, I know, it's like "you're telling us after all this time?", but I'd just like to mention that I use 'mana' and 'magic power' interchangeably because I'm just random like that. Same thing.

2. Stereotypical shoujo KabeDON(壁ドン, wall bang) scene. KabeDON (wall bang, or wall smack). New word for you all to add to your shoujo manga lingo. Google : 壁ドン

3. Nioh Statues: Google link Basically a serious and imposing stance.

4. Whether speaking politely or casually, Beatrix uses a somewhat masculine tone. It's not rough, but it's masculine.

5. You know, I'm starting to wonder now, after all this time, if perhaps Makoto was actually really obviously into Aimi, and she was just too much of a dense motherfucker to notice.

Chapter 7 - Q of Diamonds

Today is the day of Baka-sama's supplementary exam.
Actually, His Majesty doesn't think fondly of Baka-sama studying abroad.
After all, he gave Baka-sama permission to take the exam under the assumption that he'd fail, when miraculously Baka-sama passed.
The second prince who's wilful and unfettered at best of times, would be going to a place where His Majesty wouldn't be around. There's no way that His Majesty wouldn't be worried.
"Absolutely don't let him cause trouble," His Majesty instructed us guards personally.
Aahh, my stomach hurts…

On the day of that Baka-sama's supplementary exams, I was drinking his handmade stomach medicine while I waited for his return in the lobby of the Diamonds dorm.
Baka-sama is an idiot, but his ability in magic potions is amazing.
The medicines that he create have effects unmatched by others.

"Ahh, it's about time for the exams to finish, isn't it?"

I have a little time to rest until my lord returns. The strain from always being forced to babysit him just keeps building up. I want to be able to rest, at least in the times when he isn't here.

After a while, the dorm begins to get noisy. Ahh, Baka-sama has arrived, hasn't he?
He's popular with the girls. Not as much as me, but he's popular.
Moreover, the person himself is a helpless womaniser. Even in this dorm, regardless of whether they're a student or a servant, there are many devotees of Baka-sama .
…Still, today is one grade noisier than usual.
Wondering about this, I went to go see what was going on with my lord.

Baka-sama brought back a petite school girl.
She's not a member of the Diamonds faction, and seems to be a student from another faction. Honestly, he's a man who makes no distinction.

"Oh? That's…"

I saw the girl's head. She had pink hair, and from her cheek to her shoulder were tattoos… There are a bunch on her arms, too.

"Camille Rhodolite…"

Why did Baka-sama bring Camille Rhodolite…? When did they become friendly?
Speaking of which, in the past he mentioned something about liking a young lady that was at Garnet's dance party.
It couldn't be that it was her?
Baka-sama got on the magic circle that served as an elevator, and headed with her to his room.

…I have a bad feeling about this.
In a fluster, I headed towards the floor with his room, and after questioning the maid about the instructions he gave her regarding today's guest, I found that as expected, she was asked to prepare one of the prince's handmade magic teas (one with a bewitchment effect).
That guyyyy. Look, I've completely seen his ulterior motives. Even if he can fool Camille, my eyes won't be!
Just how many years do you think I've taken care of Baka-sama?

It's just a magic tea, so normally the effects wouldn't be anything that great. Even if there was an effect, it'd just be enough to change the mood.
That's why there shouldn't be any immediate bewitchment effects. No, but…
I changed my mind.
All of these teas are handmade by Baka-sama… It might be risky to consider them as having the same effect as normal magic teas.
I honestly can't let my guard down when it comes to that idiot prince. It's only in this area that his brain is put to use.

In place of the magic tea with the bewitching effects, I prepared a magic tea for fatigue and mana recovery, and headed to Baka-sama's room.

"Waka-sama, I've brought the tea."

In my lord's room was Miss Camille whom I caught a glance of earlier.
Camille-sama's silky pink hair was worn straight down, and she was happily speaking about something with an adorable smile.
She's a bishoujo. Even excluding Baka-sama, I'm sure she's easily popular.

"Ah, grazie, Bea-chin."

Baka-sama, aren't you sitting a little too close to Miss Camille?

"But still~, Camille, you really are the best, aren't you?"

"I wonder about that."

As expected of you. To continue seducing women even though I'm here, I take my hat off to my lord.

But still, Miss Camille's reply came admirably quickly.
In the game, wasn't she a girl who was very proud of her own good looks, who loved men, her favourite being the prince of her own country, but also being a slut who was weak against the compliments of good looking men in general?
Considering that she's tattooed all over her body, and her relationship with the J of Hearts, she's really too different from the original Camille.

"You are! It's not easy to find a magician of your skill, you know? I'd definitely want you to come to Topageria, and spread your knowledge of magic through our country. As my wife."

"Huh? Waif?"

Camille's words covered over the words in my mind.

"Right. Hmm? Could it be that it didn't reach you, Camille?"

"…What are you talking about?"

"Mmmmn, that's weirddd. The Rhodolite Marquis family said that they received our message, though."

"Tria-sama?"

"You see, I applied for a marriage. With you."

Haah? Before I knew it, had my lord even started making moves on women in other countries?
It seems that at some point, Baka-sama had applied for a marriage with Miss Camille without me knowing. It seems that Miss Camille didn't know about it either, and she's bewildered.

"B-, But I'm already engaged to Achille, you see."

Eh-, Miss Camille is engaged? And moreover, to the J of Hearts of all people?
Why? Aren't the two of them supposed to be like cats and dogs when it comes to the K of Hearts?
When the Heroine met with the K of Hearts end, didn't Achille socially obliterate Camille to the point that she couldn't show her face in public anymore? I can't get over this, geez.
But this trouble in my heart was blown away by Baka-sama's next line.

"But I mean, with my authority, I'd be able to do something about it, you seeee."

To think that he said the absolutely lowest line he could say to the girl that he's trying to get close to.
This guy, is he planning to forcefully break apart somebody else's marriage using his authority? I don't recall bringing up such a kid!

"You stupid kiddd! What the hell are you thinking, making a move on a girl with a fiancé!? If a horse doesn't kick you, I will!"

Oops, I ended up raising my hand against him.
Miss Camille is wide-eyed in shock.

"It huuurts! Bea-chin, what are you doing!? This is abuse of a prince!"

"Shut up, damnit."

Ah, no good, no good. Even though we're in front of a guest, didn't I just reveal our usual conduct?

"Owow… I mean, aren't you only engaged in a strategic marriage?"

"…That's-"

Oh? Miss Camille is stuck for words. Looking at how those two were behaving at the mixer, it doesn't seem that they're just in a marriage of convenience.

"Waka-sama, Camille-sama must also have her own circumstances. Impatient men end up hated, you know. …Camille-sama, please help yourself to the tea. This time we've prepared a variety of magic tea that's relatively easier to drink."

"Thanks."

Miss Camille looks relieved that the topic has moved on from that.
Savouring the magic tea in her mouth, she's smiling.

"It's delicious."

How cute! The Camille Rhodolite in the game was just annoying, but this girl is different.
As expected, this girl isn't Camille. I'm sure of it.

I want to try speaking to her.

After all, if she's in the same circumstances as me, then I'm sure she's been troubled about it all this time.

After chasing Baka-sama out of the room, I gained a chance to speak with Miss Camille.
It looks like she's being wary of me. It's understandable; in the game, the Hearts and Diamonds factions had a bad relationship.

"I shall go straight to the point. Are you, like me, …a person from a different world?"

"…-!"

Miss Camille reacted a little. Unlike how she was in the game, this Camille seems to be bad at lying.
I decided to press her further.

"The original Camille Rhodolite wouldn't have gotten into something like an engagement with Achille Jade. Her magic was also not as good as yours. She was a woman who did nothing other than chase Royce-sama about… Though, similarly, I too am very far from the original Beatrix Tapas."

Because her vigilance seemed to have slightly lessened, I told her about myself.
It seems that it was effective, and her expression softened a little. Miss Camille slowly opened those lovely, cherry blossom coloured lips of hers, and answered with what I wanted to hear.

"I see. I'm like you… somebody who came from another world. I fell down the emergency stairs at high school, and I ended up as the three year old Camille in this game world…"

She easily spoke to me about how she first ended up in this world, and how she'd been living up until now.
She was originally a high schooler, and although she hadn't completely cleared the game, she'd finished the routes of the important characters.
Of course, she knew about the fate that awaited Camille in the game as well.

"I knew it!"

Because I was overwhelmed with emotion, I unconsciously hugged her.
I've always been alone, and anxious, and there were days where I was afraid that no matter how I tried, nothing would change. It was tough.
But I had a comrade in a place like this. Camille, who had come to this world in the same way that I did.

"Whoa…!"

She was surprised at my behaviour.

"Sorry, I was just too happy… Once I thought that it wasn't just me."

Miss Camille accepted somebody like me. The fact that she's facing away a little awkwardly is probably because she's being shy.

However, I couldn't conceal my shock at her next words.

"It's not just me, you know? I probably know of two other people who came from another world."

"Who is it? Could it be the Q of Clovers who failed the exam?"

In fact, I independently researched the other characters that didn't enter the school.
In the end, I didn't know what the majority were doing, but I know about the Q of Clovers.
She took the entrance exam, but she failed.
Despite the fact that she was supposed to be a talented student in the game, what does it mean that she failed the exam?
It could be that both she and Miss Camille are people who swapped with the original characters.

"No, I don't know that person… Also, you don't have to use keigo with me, you know? In our original worlds, you're my elder after all."

"…Well then, as long as we aren't in public, I'll take you up on your offer… If it's not the Q of Clovers, then who?"

Miss Camille spoke about the possibility of the Heroine and the Q of Spades being bodyswappers.
The Heroine seemed like she might have knowledge of the game.
It seems that Miss Camille doesn't know about her personality yet, but at any rate, she's the heroine. It'd be reassuring if she was an ally.

Miss Camille spoke of yet another shocking truth.
It was about the relationship between Raiga and Mei, that I'd been wondering about since the entrance ceremony.

"The two of them are engaged, you see."

"No way! …So the two of them really are together…?"

My mind went blank.

If possible, I had wanted to try speaking to Raiga Transbaal who I had always been a fan of, once I entered the school. I held the weak hopes of even becoming lovers with him if things went well.
Right now, in that instant, it was all smashed to pieces though.

After that, I spoke to her about various other things, but as sorry as I am, because the shock was too huge, I hardly remember a thing about what we talked about.
However, I feel like at the end, I accepted an invitation to meet with Mei.

Translator Notes

1. In her internal monologue, Beatrix refers to Camille as 'カミーユ嬢(kamiiyu-jou)'. The -jou here I've translated as 'miss', and is the same 'jou' in 'ojousama' and 'jouchan'(little miss). Young, unmarried woman.

Chapter 8 - Q of Diamonds (Part 2)

Today there were no classes, so it was decided that we'd have a girls only gathering.
Camille properly remembered the promise we made on that day, and immediately put it into action. Incidentally, Baka-sama is taking supplementary lessons, so he's absent.

She brought the Q of Spades, Mei Zakro along, and came to the Diamonds faction's dorm.
The Garnet Nation's King Faction and Royal Prince Faction weren't on as bad terms as in the game, but if we gathered at either the Hearts faction's dorm or the Spades faction's dorm, it seems like one of them would find it uncomfortable to stay in.
Because of that we took the middle ground, and hosted the gathering in a garden near the Diamonds dorm's entrance.

"I-, It's nice to meet you… My name is Mei Zakro."

A girl with dark blue hair that hugged her face was trembling as she curtsied.
S-, So cute…
I can acknowledge the cuteness of the one Raiga chose as his fiancée. It's vexing though…
When I look at this girl, the desire to protect her wells up in me.

"I'm Beatrix Tapas. Let's get along, Ojousan."

At my words, Mei's face turned red, and she faced downwards.

"Y-… Yes. Let's get along."

Because she was too nervous, towards the end her voice shrank.

Mmn, this really isn't Mei, is it? The original Mei Zakro was more of a cool and bold type of character.
I've easily reached a conclusion in my mind.

"Well then, now that the three of us are here, let's start the gathering!"

Miss Camille was making a loud announcement.

"By the way, what are we supposed to do at a girls only gathering?"

Eh-, that's what you want to announce? I could see a little bit of Baka-sama in Miss Camille who had taken action with all energy and no forethought.

"Hmm. Oneesama… Amongst the girls in the Spades class, there are a lot of talks about love."

"Well then, let's go with that."

What an incredibly thoughtless response.
Is that really all right? I had to swallow back the tsukkomi that reached as far up as my throat.

"Well then, let's talk begin by talking about the type of men that we like. Huhu, I'm so happy. I've wanted to try talking about love with fellow girls at least once in my life!"

Said Mei, who had taken charge at some point.
Whilst continually referring to Camille as Oneesama, she's sticking quite closely to her.

“Oneesama, what type of men do you like? By the way, my type is one that’s slightly arrogant and overbearing, but is a gentleman who’s very sweet to me.”

Are you suddenly going to jump into praising your man?
That’s definitely Raiga she’s talking about, right?

“M-… My type?”

Miss Camille has for some reason suddenly grown agitated. Just what’s the matter…? Her eyes are swimming, and her face is red.

“I-I-I-I’d suure like to hear about Beatrix’ type first…”

“My type, huh? …It’s like Mei’s.”

And little wonder, since the person I like is one and the same as hers.

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“What an interesting conversation you’re havingg.”

While we were still in the middle of our girl’s gathering, it seems that Baka-sama returned from his supplementary lessons.
This garden is close by the entrance to the Diamonds dorm, thus, students who are returning from the school building will unfailing pass by it.
Today, Baka-sama had brought along an unfamiliar blonde student who was standing behind him.

“Waka-sama… and,”

“Royce-sama!”

Miss Camille’s face is shining. It’s almost as though she’s the in-game Camille.

The person that was with Baka-sama was the prince of the neighbouring nation, K of Hearts Royce Garnet.

“Heyys, Bea-chin. This is my friend, Royce~ Royce, this is Beatrix Tapas. She’s my knight.”

“Pleased to meet you, Your Highness.”

“…”

Huh? What’s wrong? Prince Royce is staring right at me.

“Umm…”

“A-, Ahh. Sorry for spacing out. It’s nice to meet you, Beatrix. You’ve been looking after our Camille, huh?”

“No, it is I who is being looked after. I am glad to be getting along with Camille-sama.”

Prince Royce gave me a sweet smile.
As expected of the number one popular romantic interest character. It's a smile that's well suited for use on women.

Because of the men's intrusion, our girl's gathering is temporarily over.
Miss Camille left her seat with Mei who had become nervous because of Prince Royce's appearance.
I'd heard rumours about it softening, but it seems that the factional disputes of the Garnet Nation haven't completely disappeared.

"Waka-sama, what happened to the supplementary lessons?"

"It's fine to take a bit of a break, right? If it's my studies, I'm about to have Royce teach me so it's all good~"

"Waka-sama!"

"Ahaha, I'll go get a tool for studying, okayy? I'll leave entertaining Royce up to you, Bea-chin~"

Baka-sama disappeared into the dorm, laughing frivolously all the while. Does he plan on studying in the garden? Certainly, there are tables and chairs as well, but…

"Won't you stop being so mad? I really did make a promise with Tria to study together today, after all."

Prince Royce who was still here was following up for Baka-sama. If I'm told that by him, then there's no way I can condemn Baka-sama any further.

"Ah-, yes."

Having a friend help him with his studies can already be considered admirable for Baka-sama.
This is if he doesn't cause trouble for His Highness today, but… things seem fine for now.
But still, I've been acutely feeling Prince Royce's gaze for a while now. Why is he staring at me so hard, I wonder.

"Umm, Your Highness… Is something the matter?"

"You're Tria's knight, aren't you, Beatrix?"

High Highness softly smiled. Mn, it's the smile of a model prince, isn't it?
I wonder how many women he's unconsciously taken captive with this smile of his.
However, Prince Royce is a gentle man, both in appearance and in personality. I like prim and stiff men, so I'm not lured by that smile, and continue the conversation normally.

"I am, but…?"

"Even though you're a girl. How amazing… You sure are cool."

"Eh-…"

This is the first time that I've been praised by a man for being a knight.

In Topageria, female knights are normally looked on with hostility or contempt or as something bothersome, by men.
The only exception around me is Baka-sama. I don't know why, but despite being afraid of me, he's

become attached to me. It's exactly because of this that I felt like serving Baka-sama.
I wonder if praising a female knight is because of a difference in views between Garnet and Topageria.

While I was racking my brains over this, Prince Royce spoke to me again.

"What are your hobbies, Beatrix?"

"Eh-, my… hobbies?"

Being shocked by the sudden question, I obediently answered him.

"My hobbies are… training, perhaps."

"Anything else?"

"Umm, reading books on war strategy for example… Also I enjoy strolls in the forest, you see."

"Hmmm, strolls? There's a forest near the academy, isn't there?"

"Indeed, I occasionally head there. It doubles as training."

What's with this? His Highness is continually asking me questions with a smile, but…?

"I seee, how interesting… If it's fine with you, would you mind guiding me around the forest? I've never been."

"G-, Guiding, you say? Me?"

"Just go, Bea-chin."

My lord who had gone to fetch a tool for studying from his dorm room had suddenly appeared behind me.
Damn you, Baka-sama…
Even though the other party is the prince of a nation, what are you going to do if something happens? This isn't something you say irresponsibly.

"It's fine. I'll make sure to bring guards… Is it okay?"

I was going to point out the problems from a security point of view, but my thoughts were anticipated by His Highness and he said that first.
Whilst asking 'Is it okay?' or whatever, Prince Royce is giving off an aura that seems to say that he won't accept anything other than an affirmative.
Even though in the game he was supposed to be a sparkling prince, this feeling of pressure is no joke.
Was he always such a forceful character?

With His Highness having said that much, there's no way I can decline.

"Y-, Yes… If you are fine with me… then gladly…"

Losing to his pressure, I ended up agreeing to his proposal.

"Thanks!"

His Highness flushed happily, and took my hand.

What is this…?
Why does His Highness, want to go to the forest with me upon our first meeting?
…It can't be.

I'm not an idiot either, and I'm not so dull that I'll fail to notice his forceful attitude today.
In my old world, I was a university student, so I've had a reasonable amount of experience.
In other words, Prince Royce is interested in me in that meaning of the word. I don't understand why, though.

But, I wonder why…
Even though I had come to this academy to babysit Baka-sama whilst also hoping that if chance permitted, I'd be able to romance Raiga who appeared in the game…

For a rival character like me to be romanced instead… It's an impossible development. And moreover, the other party is that Prince Royce.

…Why did the situation turn into this!?

Author's Note: Royce→Heroine was the original plan, but following the flow of the story, it ended up as Beatrix. Sorry.

Chapter 9 - Q of Hearts (Part 4)

Today I came to the forest together with Royce-sama and Achille to have a picnic.

Beatrix of the Diamonds faction is accompanying us as a guide. It seems that she's familiar with this forest.
Royce-sama… When did you get so friendly with Beatrix?
I think it was probably after that girls only gathering, but that he became close enough with her to invite her on a picnic is surprising.

When I mentioned this, "Camille, won't you have fun being with a girl friend?" he replied to me.
Certainly, it's just as he says. What, did he invite Beatrix for my sake? Royce-sama really is so kind, huh?

"Camille, Achille, please look after me as my guards today."

"Understood."

"Please leave it to me!"

Royce-sama is sparkly and lovely today as well. The light clothing he's wearing for the picnic really suit him, huh!

When I stared at Royce-sama as though eating him up, breathing wildly, Achille stood in front of me and blocked my view.

"Camille, your robe is going to get caught on branches, you know? It's because you're wearing something like this even though we're going on a picnic…"

"But… If you say 'magician's uniform' then it's a robe…"

It's the clothing I always wear to work, so just putting it on puts me at ease. It's already gotten to the point that I feel uneasy going out without it.

"Take it off."

"Eh-…"

"You're wearing clothing under the robe, right? Today we're walking in the forest, so the robe will get in the way. So take it off."

"Wai-… Achille."

Achille slipped in behind me and easily pulled off my robe.

Under my robe, I'm wearing a long black vest, and shorts. Under the vest is a grey, shoulderless shirt. This is also my work-wear.
Even like this, I can move around just fine, but like I thought, I can't calm down without the robe.

"Camille… Do you not have any clothes besides those?"

"Of course I do. The robe also comes in red, and as for the underclothing I've worn them in a variety of

colours before, and…"

Achille looked at me with an astounded look.

"…Let's go shopping next time."

In the end, my robe was confiscated by Achille.

While crunching fallen leaves, we headed to the depths of the forest. Our destination was a lake within the forest.
There we'd eat, and then we'd head back.

"Not that way, Camille. Over here."

To stop me from heading in the wrong direction, Achille grasped my hand.

"Hyaa!"

Because I stumbled with bad timing, I fell into Achille's chest.
Even though he's dainty for a guy, Achille easily caught me without staggering.

"T-, Thanks."

Suddenly, the time when Achille held me and told me that he liked me crossed by my mind, and my face grew hot.
Achille thinks of me in that way, doesn't he? He likes me as a member of the opposite sex…
While I was at it, I even recalled the incident at the girls gathering, and I was even more shaken. Even though it would've been fine just to say that Royce-sama was my type…
The face that appeared in my mind, was Achille for some reason.
Aahh, all of that was completely because that guy did something so raunchy to me! T-, To kiss me like that!

"Camille?"

Achille's wondering voice snapped me out of it.
While I was stuck in thought, the whole time I was being held by Achille.

"Sorry… It-, It's not-, -hing."

I leapt out of Achille's arms in a panic.

Because I was feeling awkward, I turned to gaze towards Royce-sama, and found that he was having fun chatting with Beatrix.
It's rare that Royce-sama is that close with a girl. Even though he normally deals with noble daughters quite blandly, and never lets them into his personal space…

Up until now, except for me, he's never been especially close to any women. Even if they're a girl that's close with me. Déborah and Désirée are a good example.
…What's with this uncomfortable and hazy feeling in my chest?

I'm sure it's because of the overeating I did at dinner last night. I mean, it was the cream cheese pasta that I like.
I was hungry for it despite myself, and was even gluttonous enough for seconds. I'm reflecting.

I decided to breathe in the fresh air of the forest and refresh myself.
Even though I say it's a forest, right now we're walking in a relatively less dense area, so there's a lot of sunlight. Perhaps because people walk this way often, there's a path large enough for several people to pass though.
There are flowers blooming on either side of the path.
Whilst looking around for flowers that seem like they'd be good for magic experiments, I continued heading into the forest.

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We finally reached the lake.
We left when it was the morning, but right now it isn't even noon yet. It seems that we got here faster than I'd have thought.
By the lake was a clearing, and I could see the sky properly. The weather is good today, so the water in the lake is calm as well.

At a place a little distance away from the lake where the ground was flat, we immediately began spreading out lunch boxes made by Royce-sama's maids on the cloth we were using as a picnic blanket.
Inside the large, but light lunch boxes were sandwich-ey things made from various foods stuffed in a baguette-like bread, and in another lunch box they even had fruits for dessert. It looks delicious.
Because I'm always eating high class-ish food, eating this type of food is a great change of pace.

We began to eat while drinking the magic tea that Beatrix brought. Today as well, it was a tea with fatigue recovery effects. It's just right for a picnic. Magic tea sure is convenient, huh…

I picked two baguettes. One was a roast tomato and cheese sandwich with something like basil in it, and the other was a sandwich with roast apple and caramel sauce, with something like custard cream mixed in.

"It's delicious…"

I don't know where the fullness from yesterday night went, but I immediately began devouring the baguettes. Dessert was something like strawberries, something like grapes, and something like mangoes.
I keep saying "something like" because I'm finding it hard to declare confidently that they're exactly the same thing.
The foods in this world are extremely similar to those in my old world, but I can't say that they're exactly the same. The strawberry-like fruit has no hairs growing from the seeds after all, and there's no calyx either, and the grape-like fruit don't grow in a bunch either. As for the fruit like a mango, there's no seed or skin, and it's a flashy and rainbow coloured.
Of course, these all have their own names as well, but they're complicated so in my head I'm just giving them the names of fruits from my old world.

"Camille, there's cream around your mouth, you know?"

Achille wiped my mouth with a napkin for me. He does it skilfully, like a mother.
The fact that the only one he takes care of this much is me, is something that I only recently realised. No, to begin with, there's no one but me who does childish things like getting cream around their mouths though.

The weather is good, and the temperature was nice and warm, and even though it was in the middle of a picnic, I became sleepy.

To fight back the sleepiness, I tidied up the lunch boxes, and went on a walk around the lake.
Fortunately, it isn't that large a lake, so it doesn't seem like it'll take me too long.

Royce-sama and Beatrix were getting along well and having a conversation while drinking tea… Hmm?
If I look carefully, for people who were getting along, Beatrix seemed a little withdrawn. Royce-sama was smiling incredibly happily though.

"Beatrix?"

"C-, Camille… Suddenly standing up like that, are you going somewhere?"

"A stroll. I'm just going to walk a lap around the lake, so I'll be right back."

"M-, Me too…"

For some reason, Beatrix looked like she was making me an entreaty with hers eyes. Maybe she needs the toilet.

"Well then, together with Beatrix-…"

"I'll come with you, Camille. It'd trouble me if you wandered off somewhere weird again, after all… And Beatrix-sama, while I'm gone, could I trouble you to look after His Highness? We won't take all that long, so it'd be great if you could enjoy the lake after we come back."

Achille cut off my offer. Is he feeling sleepy too?
But geez, even I won't get lost just walking around the lake.

"Mn, that sounds good."

Before Beatrix could reply to Achille's slightly overbearing proposal, Royce-sama answered for her.

"Achille, Camille, you two go on ahead. I'll be fine."

"…If you say so, Royce-sama."

Though I felt dissatisfied with the way this conversation went, I decided to take a walk around the lake first.

"Then I'll be going first, Beatrix. I'll leave Royce-sama to you, okay?"

With my hands joined with Achille's, I began slowly heading towards the shore of the lake.

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We were at a place with flat ground and a little grass growing, but after walking for a little while, more and more trees started to appear.
But there was a small path between the trees due to people walking there, and the path seemed to lead all the way around the lake.
Each generation of students may have walked along this path like we are now.

"A picnic once in a while isn't bad, huh?"

I looked up at Achille who was next to me. Achille was walking with a peaceful expression, still holding my right hand.

“Yeah.”

The area around the lake is peaceful. All I could hear was the sound of leaves blowing in the wind, and occasionally the songs of small birds.

“We’re always passing here through the sky, so a picnic is fresh. Achille, you haven’t done this sort of thing much either, right?”

“It’s because you’re always flying through the sky, Camille, that you can’t remember the paths on the ground. Really, don’t even think about taking a stroll in the forest by yourself, okay?”

“It’s fine. If I get lost, I can just fly.”

Achille looked astounded by my reply.

When we had made it halfway around the lake, suddenly a strong gust of wind blew. The leaves of the blowing trees danced in the air.

“Wah-, what a strong wind.”

I unconsciously shut my eyes, and Achille pulled me over as though covering me.

“Are you okay?”

“I-, I’m fine… Thanks.”

Even though I said I was fine, Achille wouldn’t move away.
On the contrary, one of his hands began fiddling with my hair… It’s ticklish, you know?

“Umm, Achille?”

When I spoke up, lost, Achille finally parted his hand from my hair.

“There were petals stuck to your hair, you know?”

“Eh…?”

In the palm of his hand were small flower petals of a slightly deep pink, that he had picked out of my hair.
Lovely flower petals blown in the wind from somewhere.

“What, so it was because of flower petals? I was surprised.”

Isn’t it your fault for making me wonder what was going on, because you suddenly started touching my hair? Because of Achille, my heart is beating violently again.

I’m just chatting with Achille normally, and being alone together is something that happens all the time.
But then why is it that when I’m alone with him nowadays, my heart will just suddenly start pounding?

“Just what did you think it was?”

Achille asked me teasingly with a smirk. He kinda seems like he's in a good mood.
As if I could say it, that lately I've been repeatedly interpreting what he does as a continuation of that shameless thing he did to me.

"Nothing really."

Because the embarassment was just too much, my reply ended up curt.
I'm not sure what was so funny, but Achille was chuckling away. As if my heart had been seen through, the embarassment in my heart just kept piling up.

There's no mistake that by the time I was led by hand back to Royce-sama and Beatrix, my face was as red as a boiled octopus.

Author's Note: It was a coordinated play by Royce and Achille.

Translator Notes

1. You know, people have mentioned that Camille is smart because she's a genius in magic. However, it's been mentioned in the memo that her nature is one of someone who is fundamentally above average in all aspects, but can never get really good at anything. Could it be that as compensation for her magical talents, the universe has robbed her of her other mental facilities?

Chapter 10 - Q of Diamonds (Part 3)

Why…? Did I do something to make this happen?
I can't comprehend it in the slightest.

Why is it that I'm doing something like having a picnic with His Highness Royce of the neighbouring nation?

My boots crunch against fallen leaves as I advance.
For something as simple as walking through this forest, something like a guide is unnecessary.

"Not that way, Camille. Over here."

J of Hearts Achille Jade was guiding Miss Camille. She's bad with directions to the extreme.
She's veered off in the wrong direction countless times now. And with full confidence in herself, too.

"Huhu, Achille and Camille sure get along, huh?"

Royce-sama gazed at them, seemingly finding it heartwarming.

Certainly, the two of them do seem to get along. This is the first time I've heard Achille use anything other than Keigo.
In the game he gave the feeling of being an "intellectual keigo-using character". For him to talk in such a manner is completely unexpected.
He was a character whose true self was difficult to read, but he feigned innocence with the game's heroine as well, didn't he?

"Your Highness, is this truly all right? To be walking in the forest with so few people."

As expected, I really was uneasy about moving through the forest with so few people, so I asked him as such.

"It's fine. Those two are strong, and I'm good at hiding myself."

His Highness Royce seems to have confidence in his two subordinates, but honestly if I had to say, those two don't look strong in the slightest.
Miss Camille is a frail noble's daughter, and Achille is quite slender for a man. They don't look suited for battle.
If it comes down to it, I have no choice but to fight, do I? I gathered strength into the hand that held my sword.

"You're strong, aren't you, Beatrix?"

"Eh-?"

"You're the personal knight of the second prince after all, and in Topageria's swordsmanship tournament you were the champion six times, right?"

"Ahh… Well…"

Why does the prince of the neighbouring country know about something like that?
Prince Royce sure is well informed, isn't he…? Or rather, perhaps he's fond of the swordsmanship

tournament.
I musn't think of this prince as the same as the prince in the game.

※

We arrived at the lake earlier than predicted.
We departed in the morning, but it still isn't noon yet. The three members of the Hearts faction have quite the strong legs, it seems.
Using Baka-sama as the basis for predicting the time it would take might have been rude to them.
There's a large clearing around the lake, so there aren't any obstacles blocking the view of the sky. The weather today is fine, so the water in the lake is calm.

Camille and Achille spread out a cloth in place of a picnic blanket on a place with flat ground, a little distance from the lake.
It looks like this cloth is of a design unique to the Garnet Nation. With red as the base colour, there's a three coloured pattern. Honestly, it like a waste to spread it out on the ground.
It seems like lunch was made by Royce-sama's maids. A Garnet cuisine that comprised a baguette-like bread with various stuffings were inside the lunch boxes. It resembles the sandwich from my old world.
I was the one who brought the drinks. It's the magic tea that Miss Camille likes.

From the number of foods lined up inside the basket, I chose a baguette with the meat of something similar to a chicken, named a teikeen, mixed in with various herbs, and a chocolate cream baguette with lots of nuts mixed in. Shockingly, this world has normal chocolate. It might be because of somebody else who like us, came from another world.

"How is it, Beatrix? Does Garnet's cuisine suit your taste?"

Prince Royce was being attentive to me. Even if he didn't worry, it'd be fine, since this is a taste that I experienced in my old world.

"Yes, it's very delicious."

"I see. That's great."

"Topageria is a country in the middle of the desert, so the foods have a lot of spices in them. You start to want to eat something different, once in a while."

"Wow, a nation in the desert sounds interesting too. I know about it, but I've never actually gone, so I'm attracted to the idea."

"This country's climate is easier to live in, so I like it. In Garnet, there are oceans and mountains, after all."

"I see! That sure makes me happy."

Crap, did I give him some weird expectations? His Highness' sparkling aura increased by 50%.
I'll enjoy the climate and land of Garnet as much as I please, but I have no plans on permanently living there though.

"By the way, I've heard that your dorm room is a room borrowed from Tria's floor. Since it's the same anyway, why didn't you just take your own room in the floor right below?"

Did Baka-sama speak to Prince Royce about the circumstances of my room?

"Well, it is because I am Waka-sama's knight. His guard as well, you see. Waka-sama is using the entire floor as his own room, so I do have my own room, you know?"

Incidentally, I'm not only his guard, but I also have the duty of keeping a look out so that Baka-sama does the things that he's supposed to, so I try to stay as close as possible.

At present, you could say that most of my job comprises that aspect. When it comes to Baka-sama, because he's famous for the stupidity of his actions, he's considered as a politically harmless stupid prince. Nobody would think of harming him. All this time, at most it was a few villains who tried to hold him for ransom.

"How's the dessert? You like maingoes, right?"

"Wh-…"

Why does he know something like that?
I certainly do like the maingo, a rainbow coloured fruit that resembles the mango. But I have no recollection of telling anybody anything like that, so it's something known only to those quite close to me.

"You like strawbrees and grayps as well, right? And as for flowers, you like deep crimson roses, and on weekends, you go to the rose garden on campus…"

There are plenty of the fruits that taste like strawberries and grapes in the basket. For all of the things that I enjoy to have been prepared… And moreover, why does he know even the flowers that I like…? I don't think even Baka-sama knows about that.

"Y-…Yes, well…"

Could this prince be a stalker?
What a shocking development, even our Baka-sama seems better than that.
No, maybe not. I mean, he's a man who'll even drug you if he has the chance. He only deals in substances that don't harm the body, but as a human, that's as low as it gets.
No… No matter how much of a stalker he might be, if he unskilfully follows me, I'll notice his presence but… for me to have noticed no such thing at all, just what kind of method did he use?

While I was at a loss as to what to reply, Miss Camille who was sitting next to me stood up.
Perhaps because she noticed the anxiety on my face, she called out to me.

"Beatrix?"

"C-, Camille… Suddenly standing up like that, are you going somewhere?"

"A stroll. I'm just going to walk a lap around the lake, so I'll be right back."

"M-, Me too…"

At this rate, staying here will be awkward, and it seems like I'll get to find out "the prince's true nature" even though I don't want to which is scary, so I stared at Miss Camille while entreating her in my mind.

"Well then, together with Beatrix-…"

"I'll come with you, Camille. It'd trouble me if you wandered off somewhere weird again, after all… And Beatrix-sama, while I'm gone, could I trouble you to look after His Highness? We won't take all that long, so it'd be great if you could enjoy the lake after we come back."

Achille cut off Miss Camille's offer.
What was that!? You plan on leaving me alone with this prince!?

"Mn, that sounds good."

Prince Royce answered Achille's slightly overbearing proposal.
Even though I haven't said a thing yet… These two are in cahoots aren't they? Even in the game, they showed their flawless combination plays whenever chance permitted.

"Achille, Camille, you two go on ahead. I'll be fine."

"…If you say so, Royce-sama."

Miss Camille was led by the hand and left. Please, wait a momentt!

However, the screams of my heart didn't reach her.
While Miss Camille and Achille were gone, I spent my time awkwardly with His Highness Royce.

"Umm, Your highness."

"What?"

"Does Your Highness like me?"

I'll pass on both awkwardness and annoying things. For these sort of things, there's nothing better than to be straightforward and clear.
After looking bewildered for a moment, Prince Royce answered my question.

"How troubling. Even though I wasn't planning on confessing like this."

While giving off the sparkling aura that I mentioned, he smiled bitterly. I feel that there are plenty of schoolgirls who would swoon just seeing him do that.

"That's right, I'm interested in you, Beatrix. It's the first time I've met a girl like you, after all."

"That is to say, a girl who wears men's clothing?"

"That's right, there's your appearance as well, but I think strong girls are cool."

Why? I'm terribly popular amongst young ladies, but in contrast, men do nothing but pretend to respect me while avoiding me. Occasionally, there are even those who hold open hostility to me.

"You sure have strange tastes, don't you, Your Highness…?"

"Really?"

"Normally, a member of the opposite sex wouldn't pay a woman like me a glance."

“That’s great. It saves me the trouble if my love rivals decrease.”

His Highness laughed, unruffled.

“However, Your Highness. I apologise but… I can’t return Your Highness’ feelings.”

I clearly let him know what I thought.
I know much too well that I’m being rude. However, I also think that you should avoid taking a vague attitude.
If you can’t respond to the other person’s feelings, then I don’t think it’s good to let them hold too many expectations.

“I see. Somebody else you like… You don’t have one, right? Would it be okay to hear the reason why you can’t?”

It seems that His Highness Royce even knows about my dating history. Won’t ask, though!
Whilst lost, I decided to speak the reason.

“It isn’t as though I dislike you, Your Highness… It’s simply that I’ve only recently been heartbroken, so I’m not in the mood for new romance.”

Truly, I only just recently discovered that Raiga had a fiancée, so my words aren’t a lie. It would be rude to Prince Royce, so I refrained from saying “I don’t like gentle men”.

“Then it can’t be helped, huh.”

Unexpectedly, His Highness easily backed down. His sad look would make a picture too.
Frankly, it was anti-climactic. Even though he did something so stalkery.

“Umm…”

“I’ll give up for now. But since we’ve already gotten to know each other, I’d be happy if we could go out together again… Would that be problematic?”

His Highness is gazing at me with sparkly and teary eyes like that of a pure puppy… It’s a face that our Baka-sama would definitely not be able to make.

I won’t be moved by those eyes of his…

“I-, Isn’t it obvious that there’s no problems with that? If it’s somewhere close-by like today, then let us go out together again.”

By the time I realised, I had already ended up replying as such.
Even if I regret it, it’s already too late…

Chapter 11 - J of Hearts

"It seems that the nobles supporting uncle are starting to move… It looks like I'm being targeted."

His Highness suddenly informed me as such.

Information about the two great factions in this nation also mostly reach my ears. So the Royal Prince Faction have finally begun to move for real?

Lately, the conflict between the Kings Faction and the Royal Prince Faction has begun to soften on the surface. Their sons, His Highness and Raiga-sama didn't have such a dangerous relationship after all.
It wasn't as though the two of them were very close to each other, but they hadn't openly come into conflict even once, and each one of them just lived as they wanted. Their subordinates also behaved as their lords did.
In response, one section of the Royal Prince Faction nobles had grown tired of waiting, and finally began to take action.

"On the other hand though, the neighbouring country also has a power that's beginning to become turbulent… Information that that power is aiming for me has also reached me."

What purpose they have, we still don't know.
Is this hostility towards Garnet Nation, or has the Royal Prince Faction even reached their hands into the neighbouring country?
It's a complicated issue, but there are nobles of the Royal Prince Faction who have wedded their daughters into the neighbouring country.

"It isn't as though we're sure that the nobles of the Royal Prince Faction and the power of one section of the neighbouring nation have joined hands, is it?"

"Mmn. That's why I was thinking of wringing them out… I haven't been able to really catch them after all."

"…Your Highness."

I'm having a bad feeling about this. Recently, His Highness has become a little reckless.
He was already a person with a strong sense of curiosity, but it seems that that's been heading in a no good direction. Doing things with half-baked ability is just dangerous.

"I'll have you and Camille cooperate with me as well."

His Highness' plan is as follows.
He'll go out to have fun in a mountain that's on campus… There, he'll watch the movements of the Royal Prince Faction and determine which power it is.

"For the sake of that, I'll be having a student born in the neighbouring nation help me."

"…Even though they'll be going through something dangerous, is there really a student willing to help you with this?"

"It's fine! She's strong, after all. I mean, she's the guard of the neighbouring nation's prince after all."

…I get the feeling that these kind of rash ideas are completely the fault of Camille's influence.

"And, she's willing to help you?"

"Nope? All I said was that we'd be having a picnic together."

"…You really are the worst, huh."

His Higness smiled sweetly… An affirmative.
I don't want to admit it, but this side of him seems to be because of my influence. I wouldn't do something so sleazy though.

"Now, now, don't get so mad. I don't think it'll be necessary, but if it comes down to it, I'll protect her after all."

Certainly, His Highness has become strong. Unnecessarily so.
I'm not sure how or why, but recently His Highness has been playing at being a spy, and his information gathering skills have grown to a considerable level. Even though spy skills are completely unnecessary for a prince.

"However…"

"It looks like you aren't getting on board, huh, even though I even came up with a great plan where I could have a date whilst exposing the criminals."

"…Just now, what was that?"

"Eh? A date I said, a date."

"With who?"

"Like I said, with the girl who's the guard of the neighbouring nation's prince."

"Who would?"

"Me… Achille, why are you sighing? Even though this is a great plan that even kills two birds with one stone."

His Highness is also of that age.
Without me realising, it seems that at some point His Highness has fallen for that student from the neighbouring nation.
But, if she found out that she was being used for this kind of plan… Why doesn't he realise that she'd grow to hate him? He's developing emotionally in a slightly warped direction, which worries me.

"Her strength is famous in the neighbouring nation, you know. The martial pride tournament held by the nation came out with her as the victor as much as six times, and an evil organisation that tried to touch Tria was completely destroyed by her alone. If even knowing that, they attack in disdain, then they're people of our nation. If they attack whilst looking wary of that, then the chance that they're from the neighbouring nation is high."

"…You really are the worst, huh."

"Don't condemn me so much. Ah, keep silent about this from Camille?"

"…Certainly if Camille found out about this, she'd be incredibly shaken, huh. And she's stupidly honest, so… it's inevitable that her movements will become stiff."

"Mn, so let's have say it's a normal picnic. So that the number of guards decrease, and I'll get targeted… while we're having the picnic, I'll have you two move away from me."

"But if anything happens to Your Highness…"

"Do you think something will? You and Camille are coming along… As for whether or not the Royal Prince Faction and the neighbouring nation have any connection, we'll wring that out of the people we catch. We'll be carrying it out next break, so keep your schedule free, okay?"

His Highness unilaterally told me as such.
If it's his order, then even if I have something I want to say about it, there's no way I can go against him.

"Hahh… Understood. You really are the worst, huh."

"You've said that three times, you know?"

His Highness was beginning to smile gloomily, so I decided to immediately leave.
Honestly, who does this guy take after?

※

On the day of the picnic, His Highness introduced me to a crossdressing schoolgirl.
She's the daughter of a count in the neighbouring nation, Topageria.
Her jet black hair was tied up with a simple string of a design unique to Topageria. Hanging from her waist was a largish sword.

After hearing about Miss Beatrix from His Highness, I've been researching her up until today, but Miss Beatrix doesn't hold any malice towards His Highness, and she's on good terms with Camille as well.
I can't say that we can completely trust her, but for now it should be okay to travel together.
For a while now, His Highness has been stuck to Miss Beatrix. That Camille didn't bat an eyelid at His Highness' suddenly courting someone left me a little surprised.

Once we'd reached the lake, His Highness and I immediately decided to set the plan into action.
The lake was smaller than I'd thought, and was a size that we'd immediately be able to walk a lap around, but I got permission to use a "abnormality detection" magic on His Highness so that I'd know immediately if anything happened, just in case.

With good timing, aftering eating lunch Camille started talking about how she wanted to go on a stroll and have a look around the lake. Camille was planning on having me stay with His Highness, but that would mess up the plan, so I immediately stood up as well.
I cut off Miss Beatrix before she could say that she wanted to go as well, and then began to lead Camille away.
At first, Camille was looked at me in protest, but it looks like she sensed something from my face. After that, His Highness's words backed me up, and led by my hand, she obediently began to walk. Even while making a face that said that she didn't agree.

While we were on the path around the lake, I turned to look in His Highness' direction, and found that he was smiling very happily. It looks like he's satisfied with being left alone with Miss Beatrix.
Without knowing my feelings at all, he's enjoying himself.

If His Highness is going to be like that, then for a little while, I'll enjoy my stroll with Camille as well.
Camille's small right hand was faintly warm, soft and pleasant to the touch. The sunlight was warm as well.
Even though were it not for the fact that today's excursion was wrapped up in His Highness' plan, I'd be enjoying this even more… It feels like a bit of a shame.

Roughly halfway around the lake, a strong wind suddenly blew. The fallen leaves and litter was whirled up by it, so I immediately covered Camille.

"Are you okay?"

"I-, I'm fine… Thanks."

Aahh, she became shaken with great timing.
Lately, somehow or other Camille's been led around the nose by my every action. Up until now, she's taken no notice of things in that manner whatsoever, so I'm happy about this change.

Camille who was being nervous had flower petals stuck in her hair. They were flower petals of a slightly deeper pink than the pink of her hair.
When I reached my hand out towards the petals, Camille stirred a little. Today, her hair is curled inwards. Hair that always looks silky and beautiful.

"Umm, Achille?"

Camille's lost voice suddenly woke me up. It seems that I was unconsciously playing with her hair.

"There were petals stuck to your hair, you know?"

I showed her the petals that were my original goal.

"What, so it was because of flower petals? I was surprised."

Camille acting plainly suspiciously was adorable, so I accidentally said something teasing.

"Just what did you think it was?"

"Nothing really."

She was feigning calm, and her reply was blunt, but her ears were bright red so it was pointless.
That too was lovely, so I wrapped my left arm around her right.

Author's Note: Next time, I have a battle-scene-ish story planned.

Chapter 12 - J of Hearts (Part 2)

In just a little while longer, we'll have finished the lap around the lake and have reunited with His Highness.
Camille and I have walked as far as a place close to the rest spot.
Having walked this far, we can see His Highness and Miss Beatrix between the gaps in the trees, but there's no sign of the villains making their move.

It might be a poor catch this time.
When I was thinking this, and was about to make my way back to His Highness, from the trees in the opposite direction of His Highness that we were, came the presence of a number of people.

Miss Beatrix who was beside His Highness glared towards the presences with a severe expression. Her hand was against the grip of her sword.
When I ran towards the presence of the villains, Camille surrounded His Highness with magic traps from between the gaps in the trees. Camille linked complicated magic from a long distance… Lately, she's been becoming more and more inhuman.

Behind His Highness from the shade of the trees appeared roughly twenty men. All of them were dressed in black.

"You are Prince Royce, aren't you?"

"That's right?"

At the same time that His Highness gave a stupidly honest answer, the men all attacked him together. I wish His Highness would choose his words just a little better.

"Your Highness, behind me!"

Miss Beatrix covered His Highness behind her back, and drew her sword. It was a largish curved sword.
However, before Miss Beatrix had a chance to step forward, Camille activated her traps.
The ground parted, thorny vines stretched out, and coiled around the black clothed men. The men who couldn't even move.
…It looks nothing but painful.

The men who were lucky enough to run from the vines were all struck about by my wind magic. Of course, I made sure not to take any lives.
While watching them all, His Highness smiled happily as he spectated the event.

"Achille, you can't kill any, okay?"

"Of course I know that. The only one who would make a blunder like that would be Camille, you know?"

In the blink of an eye, the villains were all rounded up. It really ended too quickly.

"They underestimated us too, huh~ For them to have thought they could do anything with assassins of this caliber."

"Truly. It was so easy that on the contrary I'm worried about it though."

His Highness sent off a communication spell towards the academy. He's probably contacting his subordinates to have these knaves taken away.

"Royce-sama! I'm glad you're safe!"

Camille came flying on a quill.

"You're safe too, I see. Your vines this time were well done."

"Ehehe~"

Camille was twisting and turning her body in happiness. It's completely the picture of a dog being happily praised by its owner.
I tore away the fiancée who had the right demeanour for infidelity.

※

After a while, ten of His Highness' subordinates came running.
We handed over the villains that we caught. After this, they'd probably be harshly interrogated.

"Even though I invited you all the way here, Beatrix, it ended up quite a picnic, huh. I'm sorry."

"No…"

Miss Beatrix shooked her head.

"You're kind… Next time I'll give it my all to make sure you have fun, so won't you give me a chance to do this over?"

Just whose mouth is this coming out of…? I'm in awe at His Highness' shamelessness.

"Your Highness."

"Or could it be that because assassins will probably come after me, that you don't want to go out with me anymore?"

"There's no way! That kind of thing-"

Miss Beatrix was flusteredly denying it… Even though it would've been fine to just say yes.

"Thanks, Beatrix."

His Highness gave his trademark smile, and grasped Miss Beatrix's two hands.

"…Hahh."

Whilst looking troubled, Miss Beatrix was being coaxed by His Highness.
However, it's my first time seeing a young lady who isn't swayed by His Highness' sparkly attack.

After making sure Miss Beatrix made it to the Diamonds dorm safely, His Highness headed to the castle with a number of his guards. He's going to deal with the aftermath.

Unfortunately, Camille and I who aren't formally his aides, are relieved of our duties as of this moment.
Camille looked like she had regrets, and was repeatedly glancing at the back of His Highness who was leaving with other guards.

"Achille…"

Camille suddenly muttered.

"The incident this time, did you know about it beforehand?"

"Yeah."

When I brought Camille to the lake, she probably realised something.

"I knew it. We didn't bring the usualy guards, after all… Why was it only me, that was left out?"

Camille was pouting just a little.

"Because, if we told you Camille, you'd start acting suspiciously, right? The plan this time was to lure out the criminals."

"Uu… Then you're saying that this time Royce-sama volunteered to play the bait?"

"Right. I was given an order, so I had to obey, after all. Starting from now, at the castle they'll be sniffing out the mastermind behind this, it seems."

That has nothing to do with me, though…

"It's frustrating, isn't it."

Camille let out a rare sigh.

Camille and I are still in the position of students.
And in the end, we're nothing more than "people His Highness have taken a liking to", and are by no means his "official aides".
At times like these, I feel vexed by the line drawn by our positions. Camille is probably feeling the same.

At first, I thought Camille was just going to continue her job without going to any school.
She's like her father in that she loves magic and jobs that deal with them, after all.
But the moment His Highness decided to go to school, she immediately decided on entering as well.
Whilst saying "I have to determine what kind of person the heroine is" or something nonsensical like that.
Even now, she should be wanting to immediately follow His Highness.

"Camille, let's head back to the dorm."

"Yeah…"

When I held out my left hand, Camille naturally took it.
I'm in no position to be saying this after making a move on her myself, but really, what defencelessness.
Has she noticed it?
That normally, as long as a man and woman of our age weren't lovers, we wouldn't be holding hands

like this…

Chapter 13 - Q of Hearts (Part 5)

"Camille, Camille… Wake up!"

"Mn……"

What's going on? There a knock at the door. Even though it's still the middle of the night…

I can see a golden moon from the window of my room.
Even though I wanted to have a deep sleep after walking that far for the picnic yesterday…

"Camille, His Highness has…"

I can hear somebody's room from the hallway…… His Highness……? Eh!?

"Royce-sama!"

I reflexively jumped up.

It seems that I really wasn't hearing things. Somebody's knocking hard at the door.
Aahh, it seems it wasn't a dream. It's Achille's voice too.

"What's wrong? To come here at this hour…"

I promptly headed to the door and undid the lock to my room. Before the door was Achille in light clothing.
It's night, so the hallway that continued behind him was pitch dark.

"His Highness was attacked on the way to the castle… He was abducted by somebody."

"…Eh?"

My just woken head couldn't keep up with the information I was suddenly given, and my thoughts stopped for a moment.

Royce-sama being attacked… I mean, didn't we just come back together from the picnic?
He was laughing happily. But then for him to get abducted right after… It's something difficult to suddenly believe.

"I-… Is Royce-sama okay? There were guards with him, right?"

"It seems that the guards were wiped out, and His Highness was the only one taken… They were almost at the castle."

For the guards to have been wiped out is no small matter.

"…Why did information come at this time? We parted with Royce-sama at dusk. We weren't that far from the castle, and even if they were late, the information should have come before I slept."

"They probably delayed it… We're just young students, and just "people His Highness have taken a liking to" after all…"

Meaning that guards and soldiers on active duty, and then the heads of prominent noble families were all contacted first. But still, this is cruel.

“Let’s head to Royce-sama’s room. I’ll use search magic.”

“You plan on chasing His Highness?”

“Of course I am!”

“This is an enemy that completely wiped out the guards, you know?”

“But… If we don’t hurry up and save him, Royce-sama might be in danger.”

Even while we’re talking like this, he might be in danger.

“Calm down.”

I’d lost my composure, so Achille gently hugged me.

“Achille, but…”

“It’ll be okay. The enemy abducted His Highness alive, after all. They shouldn’t immediately kill him or anything, okay?”

“You’re right… But I’m worried about Royce-sama.”

I left the room, and pulled Achille by the hand.

“Let’s go, Achille!”

I know too well that I’ve lost my cool. But even so, I can’t help but worry.
Forcefully pulling Achille along, I continued down the hallway.
It seems like all the other students are fast asleep. There are no people.

I used magic to unlock the door to Royce-sama’s room, and intruded.
Normally there would be two guards posted even in front of the door, but today Royce-sama isn’t here so the area around the room is deserted as well.
Royce-sama’s room is two sizes larger than a normal student’s. The furnishing is luxurious too.

“Let’s borrow this.”

I took a memo pad that was on Royce-sama’s desk, and invoked search magic.
The memo pad turned into a ball of light, and danced in the air.

“Camille, are you really planning on going right now? I think it’s reckless though.”

“Then I’ll go by myself.”

Following the ball of light, I left Royce-sama’s room.
Because there would be a distance to walk, I plan on flying on my quill once I leave the building.

“Camille, wai-…”

“Ugyah!”

The moment I turned the corner, I bumped into something running in the other direction at ferocious speeds.
I fell over magnificently, but because Achille supported me from behind, it ended without me tumbling unseemingly.

“Ouchhh.”

Whatever I bumped into was standing there just fine. I’m jealous. While being supported by Achille, I stare at the culprit behind the collision.
It was somebody that shouldn’t have been here… How rare.
Even though our classes have been different lately, so it’s rare that we even see each other’s faces.

“…Raiga-sama?”

Achille was shocked as well, and gazed as Raiga.
But that was only for a moment, and he immediately tried to chase him out. As expected of Achille.

“To intrude in the Hearts Class’ dorm at this hour, is there something the matter?”

Right, right, I don’t know what he needs in a place like this, but we’re in the middle of something right now.

“Have you seen Mei? I haven’t seen her since I’ve come back.”

By the way, whenever I get called out by him, it’s almost always about Mei.

“Mei-chan? I don’t know anything about that, but…”

“Search for her.”

This flow events again…? I’m not a Mei-chan Searching Machine, you know.

But because there’s the incident this time as well, I can’t be too optimistic about it. I’m worried about her as well.

“I understand. I’ll follow up Mei-chan’s magic power. I’m sorry, but we have an urgent matter of our own, so you’ll have to search for her yourself, Raiga-sama.”

With the magic that I used to search for Mei last time, I produced a magic light that would lead to Mei’s location.

“Mn… Huh?”

Mei’s magic power is weak. Something is happening right now with her body.
If it just wasn’t for Royce-sama’s case, I’d want to go after her but… it’s a race against time for Royce-sama.

“Once I’m finished with my stuff, I’ll help find Mei-chan. There’s a good chance that you’ll finish things up before that happens though.”

“Doens’t matter. Just the search magic is plenty.”

Raiga immediately turned around and followed the light to where Mei was.
We decided to follow the light and head towards Royce-sama as well.

“No matter what I say, you don’t listen do you, Camille.”

Achille looked astonished, smiling bitterly behind me.

“…Sorry.”

“But you’re not going to quit, right? If it really gets dangerous, I’ll stop you even by force, alright?”

“Uu…”

Turning back to face Achille, I felt regret.
He’s smiling, but this guy is actually quietly being terrifyingly mad…
I know. That’s the smile he makes when his mood is incredibly bad!

“W-, We have to hurry…”

I decided that I hadn’t seen it, and ran with the light towards Royce-sama.
I’m definitely not running away from Achille. Honest.

The light that shone dimly in the dark hallway continued through the dorm.
It seems that the light for Mei is going in the same direction as ours, so Raiga is walking in front of us.
The lights headed towards a window in the hallway, and then flew out of the building.

Chapter 14 - Q of Hearts (Part 6)

"Nn… This… Outside the academy?"

The light that showed Mei's location was pointing in the same direction as where Royce-sama was.
Achille and I took out our quills and floated them in the air.
From here on, it would likely be faster to go by air.

"Oi, let me on too. Our destinations are probably different, so just partway is fine."

I nodded at Raiga. If it's just partway, then it's fine if I bring him while I'm at it.
He's good at fighting with weapons, but he's bad with all magic in general.

"Please get on behind me."

Without hesitation, Raiga sat down on the quill behind me.
Achile sent a gaze like he had something he wanted to say, but going by his bad mood from earlier, talking with him would probably take a while, so I didn't pay any attention and flew out the window. Or more like, I ran.

"To have this kind of weather at a time like this, we're sure out of luck, huh."

It was raining buckets outside.
In the waterfall-like downpour, large drops of rain hit all over my body. I immediately used a simple rain ward spell.
A barrier that repelled the rain was spread around the quill,

"Magic sure is useful, huh. To be this all-purpose, it all seems like fraud."

"Raiga-sama…"

Though this is a convenient world where magic exists, there are also a certain number of people who don't look kindly upon it. Raiga seems to be one of them.
Amongst them are a large number of people with the view, "magic will make humans conceited, which will be their downfall".
As a person who works as a magician, it's not as though I don't think "as if!" but certainly there are a number of magicians who are like that, so I can't completely deny it.
But I won't get conceited, so I decided to give a soft rebuttal to Raiga.

"Magic like this that's useful for everyday life is good, you know? You can use it when it suddenly starts raining after you've gone out, as well. If you went out together with Mei-chan it wouldn't end with just wet clothes, you know?"

"Your thinking is warped. If you take shelter, then it ends there, and then there's the feelings that grow in a situation like that too. Well, it's not like you've ever had any experience like that though, huh."

Uwahh! What's this guy done to Mei while they were taking shelter from the rain?
Because I was countered from an improper angle, I turned around at him in shock. Raiga was looking down on me with a bold smile.

No, but from Mei's fond talks of Raiga that I hear from time to time, even though he seems like this, Raiga is actually a surprisingly pure person.

“Well, I bet all you do is hold hands until the rain stops anyway, right? How pure you are, Raiga-samaaa.”

“You… Are you mocking me?”

“The one doing the mocking is you, right? To begin with, I wouldn’t flirt about with someone while taking shelter in the fiiiirst place.”

Well soorry. I wasn’t able to experience that even in my old world.

When it came to me, even if I had a boyfriend who confessed to me, it never lasted long.
They, who fell into despair after peeling away the temporary niceness of the fake me, would always fling the words “You’re different than I expected.” at me before leaving.
Even if we made memories together, we’d break up before it got to that point.
…I seem to have ended up recalling something unpleasant.

In the rain, we continued to fly after the lights, but because the waterfall-like rain was clinging to the rain repelling barriers, it was hard to see ahead.

“Next time I’ll see if I can add wipers to this.”

“Oi, you’re muttering something nonsensical.”

“It’s just something that youuu, don’t understand, Raiga-sama.”

But still, to think that the light chasing after Mei is still heading in the same direction as Royce-sama’s.

Lightning flashed in the distance.

“This time it’s lightning, huh…?”

‘Why is it only today?‘ I want to cry out. Lightning is dangerous.
It’s a little doubtful as to whether my “automatic defence” tattoos that only have support magic will be able to completely protect against it, and more importantly, Raiga who has no tattoos is bare.
Even though the weather during yesterday’s picnic was so good…

“Raiga-sama, I’ll use lightning protection magic, okay?”

I added lightning protection magic to the rain protection barrier. Achille who was next to me also used lightning protection magic.
But still, even though we’re flying quite quickly, we haven’t reached the destination at all. Just how long are we supposed to continue flying?

The two lights continued flying out of the royal capital.
I continued to feel more anxious.

Chapter 15 - Q of Spades

"Hey you, won't you come with me for a little bit?"

The one who called out to me was a girl in the same Spades class as I was.
She was Claire-sama, the Ten of Spades.

She loves, loves, loves Raiga-sama… so at every given moment, she'll make me her target. In the past, there was also the time when she locked me in a storeroom.
After being rescued from the storeroom, Raiga-sama scolded them, but… it looks like her heart won't chance with only that much.

Honestly speaking, I didn't want to follow her. Because I know what kind of result it has.
I'm sure it will be a repeat of the time with the storeroom.
That time, Raiga-sama and Oneesama saved me.
But today Raiga-sama has gone out, and Oneesama said she would be out having a picnic in the mountains as well.
It's only at times like these that the two of them are both gone. That might be why she chose today to target me.

"I'm sorry, I have something to attend to and…"

"Whatever, just start walking."

"St-…Stop this."

My wrist was forcefully caught by Claire-sama, and when I unconsciously strongly shook it off, an expression of rage floated onto her face.

"You! Seize this woman and go!"

At her command, her servants and followers came out from hiding, and drew near me. In terror, my legs began to unconsciously retreat.

"No…!"

I immediately moved to escape, but I was already encircled by them. Behind me is a wall.

One of the servants grabbed my skirt.
With that as a sign, the servants, and the girls who were her lackeys stretched out their hands towards me.

"No-, let go! Stop it…"

I resisted, and the hem of my skirt was torn. In the chaos, one of girls kicked me in the stomach.

"Uu…"

I immediately curled up to defend myself, but this time they grabbed my hair.

"It hurts, it hurts-"

“Start walking!”

One of the other follower girls pushed me in the back.
Will I be taken to the storeroom again…? The terror from that day was brought back to my mind.
Being pulled and dragged along, I was brought to the deserted back school gate. In front of the gate were a number of carriages.

“Get on this!”

Claire-sama ordered me, but I shook my head. Even though I don’t know where I’ll be taken to. There’s no way I’ll get on such a thing.
I frantically resisted.

“No! I will not get on!”

I’m more than prepared for the trivial bullying of the daughters of nobles. I chose Raiga-sama even so… But.

“How annoying! A woman of low birth shouldn’t complain so much!”

My arm was firmly caught by a follower, and my other arm was grabbed by another woman. The two of them intentionally sank their nails into my arm. Their long nails dug into my skin.

“It hurts-!”

I lost myself and swang my arms about.
Even if by some chance they got hit, it would only be their own fault. Even I have no reason to accept this one-sided treatment.
However, the next moment, an electric current ran through my whole body, and my body suddenly lost its strength.

“Nuoh… St-”

My whole body was numb, and I couldn’t speak properly. No matter how I tried, my body wouldn’t move.

“My… You’ve saved me. As you can see, she was tough so I had trouble.”

Claire-sama is speaking to somebody. But I can’t turn my head, so I couldn’t see them.
Aahh, I hate my weakness. If things were going to end up like this, then I should have learned magic for self-defence from Oneesama.

Even if I regret it, it’s too late now.
The carriage I was riding on clattered as it left the school behind.
On the other side of the carriage were two servant women. One of them was restraining me, but I couldn’t resist at all.
It’s pathetic, and frustrating… Tears flowed down my cheek.

※

“What’s the meaning of this? This… It isn’t what we agreed.”

“This woman resisted. It’s not my fault!”

I woke up to men arguing.
It seems that after that, I lost consciousness.
I’m laying on the floor of a broad, white room that I’ve never seen before. My back is up against the hard floor, which hurts a little.
The coldness from the smooth and pure white stone floor is spreading through my entire body.

“Nn…”

Ah, I’ve become able to make a sound. It seems that the numbness in my body is gone too.
But my arms and legs are bound, and I can’t move freely.
I’m just barely able to move my neck, so I looked towards the source of the voices.
There was a fat, middle-aged man who looked like a noble… If I remember correctly, that’s the head of the Royal Prince Faction, Count Tito.
He’s also Claire-sama’s father.

“You, injured her…”

“I already said why!!”

A small built boy with navy blue hair and dark skin argued with the count even more. That’s…

“Kai…?”

I looked at the person who was speaking to the count, and unconsciously let out a voice.
Why? Why is he at a place like this?

“Mei…”

Kai turned his face, and our eyes met. He was looking at me with a bitter expression.

“Kai, why-…”

“Sorry… You, got injured.”

Kai was looking painfully at the wounds I got when I was taken away.
The way his words come out intermittently are the same as before.
Aahh, it’s Kai… He suddenly disappeared from the castle, and because he was missing I was worried, but I’m glad that he seems well.
I have my doubts about why he’s in a place like this, but I’m relieved at the fact that he’s safe.
But why is Kai apologising to me?

Kai ran over to me, and kissed the wounds that the servant’s nails gave me.

“Sorry, Mei.”

He kissed it again, and again.

“Kai…? I’m okay. So, umm…”

To have my wounds kissed like this by my younger brother is really quite embarassing. I’m glad that he’s worried about me, but…

“Mei, Mei.”

“Kai, stop it. It’s a little embarassing.”

Kai obediently obeyed my words.
My cute younger brother. Even though he has the same face as me, he has a completely different personality to me.
He’s a kind boy, who’s always looked after me since I lost my memories at 5.
In the time that we’ve been apart, he’s become just a little more mature looking.

“Mei, just bear with this, for a little… After I’m done tidying this up, we’ll go together.”

Go together, where?

“Kai, what do you mean?”

“Mei… You’ll come with me, and leave this country.”

“Why are you saying something like that?”

I’m going to school at the academy, and I’m also engaged to Raiga-sama. But despite that, to suddenly leave the country…

“Mei, your life is going to be, targeted from now on… By the Royal Prince Faction. So, let’s excape.”

“What do you mean?”

“This man, is participating in the Royal Prince Faction’s usurpation of the throne. And, he wants his daughter, to marry Raiga.”

“I’m being a hindrance?”

If they’re aiming to marry Raiga-sama, then I who am his fiancée would be a hindrance no matter what.

“Right… Made a deal. In exchange for letting you escape safely, I, would bring the prince.”

“His Higness Royce is here too?”

“Yes. In a cell.”

Such a thing… It looks like Kai abducted His Majesty.
He’s always been strong. But, to use Kai in such a manner…

“I won’t forgive you. Using me to make Kai do something like this…”

“Oi, oi, that has nothing to do with me. Your little brother suggested that on his own. He doesn’t want to hand you over to Raiga-sama, and I want to marry my daughter off to Raiga-sama, so our interests aligned, that’s all.”

“No way…”

In disbelief, I looked at Kai. Right. He left the castle right after Raiga and I got engaged.

“Mei…”

Kai gazed at me with a bitter expression.

“…What do you plan on doing by having Kai abduct His Highness? What is it that you’re trying to do?”

I glared at the count. The count pulled a cigar out of his pocket, lit it, and after a pause, answered my question.

“Fuu, isn’t that obvious? Right now, it’s as your brother says. Royal Prince Kuuga… Because he’s aiming to have Raiga-sama rise to the throne in the very end… By marrying my daughter to Raiga-sama, I’ll seize this country through the mother’s bloodline.”

“That kind of selfish thing won’t be permitted, you know.”

“Shut up, girl. Even though you’re a noble at the very bottom of the Royal Prince Faction, for you to be a traitor who colludes with the King Faction… Switching Raiga-sama’s position with the prince, and then having him rise to the throne. After that, there won’t be a thing anyone can do, since the real power will lie with us, after all.”

The count was looking down at me scornfully, and trampled my body.

“Uu… Gu…-”

“This is different than what we agreed… We agreed that Mei would not be injured.”

“It’s the fault of that woman for saying something disagreeable. Take the girl, and get the hell out.”

“I would even if you didn’t tell me to.”

“Listen up, we’ll have the national boarders guarded. Don’t come back to this country again.”

“I know.”

Shouldering me, Kai walked towards the door.

“No… Stop, Kai. I still want to stay in this country. I don’t want to part with Raiga-sama in such a way, please.”

“…Mei, give up, on Raiga-sama.”

“No. No…! Kai… Please.”

I frantically pressured him. To be unallowed to meet with Raiga-sama again, would be too unbearable.
And, I have not even the slightest intention of parting with Raiga-sama.
Moreover, it looks like at this rate, His Majesty and His Highness Royce will be in danger.
I can’t abandon them and leave the country, knowing this.
When I tried to oppose, a door in the room quietly opened.

“Otousama, you haven’t killed that woman yet?”
“Claire…”

In front of the door appeared the culprit who brought me here, Claire-sama.
She was the polar opposite of I who was beaten up with my clothes torn. She was wearing a beautiful violet dress, and make-up.

"You said that you would kill her, didn't you!?"

"But, these two agreed that they would leave the country."

"I don't care about that! Even if this cockroach woman leaves the country, isn't it obviously that she'll immediately turn up back at Raiga-sama's side!?"

The moment she said 'cockroach woman', Kai's expression became severe.
However, it's just as Claire-sama says. I have no intention of quietly living overseas.
I'd probably immediately head back to Garnet, to Raiga-sama's side.

"Kill, her, kill her, kill her! That woman is in the wrong! She seduced and deceived Raiga-sama… It's because of that woman that I was rejected! Even though the one that fits him best is me!"

Claire-sama went mad, and continued complaining to the count.

After making a show of of thinking for a while, the count turned to Claire-sama.

"There's really no helping you, huh… I've got it. The prince is also in our hands. There's no problem with having these two disappear as well."

It seems that he's a father who's sweet on his daughter, and he immediately changed his opinion.

"Thank you, Otousama! I'll be the one to finish that woman off~!"

The crazed Claire-sama was cackling shrilly. I'd endured a number of her harassments, but to think that she hated me enough to do this… It's a shock.

"Kai…"

"It's okay."

Kai produced a blade from his pocket, and undid my bindings. Having my arms and legs freed, I stood up by myself.
He was blocking me from the count, as though to shield me.

"No matter how strong you might be, can you protect your older sister while fighting off a large number of people?"

Behind the count appeared a number of large men, who were obviously in a combat profession.
Altogether, there were probably fifty people.
Fighting off this many opponents… It's crazy.

"Kai, I'm fine, so escape."

"It's okay, I'll, protect you…"

Even though it's at a time like this, Kai gave me a smile to reassure me.
Even though had it just not been for me, he might have been able to escape with his ability.

The men who were after us, expressionlessly drew closer, step by step.
I'm sure that these people think nothing of killing a human.

"Ahaha, hurry up and be killed. I'll feed your corpses to the pigs."

Claire-sama is looking at me, while laughing enjoyably.
…She's insane.

The moment Kai set up his knife in a guard, an explosion rang out from downstairs.

"What's going on?"

The moment I was thinking that I could hear the sound of running footsteps from outside the room, a man who seemed to be the count's subordinate appeared.

"It's an intruder! Somebody has destroyed the gate to the estate!"

"Tsk… We're already found out, huh?"

The count clicked his tongue with a loathesome expression, and then gave an order to the man.

"Gather the soldiers we have hired, and eliminate the intruder. After that, bring out the prince from his cell. Got it?"

"…Understood."

The subordinate man ran down the hallway with a pitter patter. It seems that somebody has come to this mansion.
Just who is it, I wonder… Since it seems that His Highness Royce was captured, I wonder if it's the people from the castle.

I don't know who it is, but please come quickly…!
As though praying, I thought this, and clenched my two hands tightly.

First Year First Semester – Mansion

Chapter 16 - Q of Hearts (Part 1)

The search magic that I invoked flew into an old western-styled mansion, outside of the royal capital.
It's a very large building, but perhaps because it isn't normally used, the garden is a mess.

"This place? …Why is Mei in a place like this?"

Raiga frowned in doubt.

We landed near the gate to the mansion. I put away the quill, and stepped down onto the wet ground.
Achille landed as well, right beside me.
The light that was pursuing Royce-sama and the light pursuing Mei both indicated the same place.

"Aahh, I have an idea about the culprit. It's probably one of the people currying up favour with my father."

"If it comes down to it, do you think you can fight? From here on out, it might be dangerous."

"Not a problem."

On this occasion, Raiga will be helping as well.
In the game, he was used to fighting, and was the strongest romantic interest. Whether he's the strongest right now is a little hard to say, but he shouldn't be weak.

Raiga drew a slender sword from the scabbarb at his waist. It was a thin, and straight longsword.

"The lightning protection magic is still in use, so please feel free to go as crazy as you'd like."

Raiga let out a grin at my words. He wants to stain the people who kidnapped Mei with blood, doesn't he?
I understand his feelings quite well; I too can't forgive the culprits who abducted Royce-sama.

I began by grandly destroying the gate.
I mean, there are probably guards lying in wait at any rate. I don't like small fights.
Just as I suspected, a number of men who seemed to be guards came bustling out from the mansion.
Is that thirty of them altogether?
They came running across the soaked ground, aiming for us.

I let loose lightning magic. An electric current transmitted through the wet ground. The whole garden was filled with golden light.
We had defence against lightning, so we were unharmed.

Stepping over the guards who were unable to move now, we invaded the mansion.

"Camille! Suddenly destroying the gate is too reckless! The ground just happened to be wet so you could take them out in one go, but if it wasn't…"

"It's okayyyyy, Achille. Because of what we did just now, Royce-sama will know that we've come to save him.

"The enemies will have known as well, though. Camille, we're still students, and we're not professionals at combat like this, so don't do anything reckless. I sent a communication spell towards the

castle just now, so if it becomes dangerous, don't charge on ahead and wait for reinforcements. Okay?"

Achille was looking at me worriedly. It seems that his bad mood from before has softened a little.

"It's fine. It's different from ten years ago. I've gotten stronger, you know."

"Even so, I'm worried. I don't want that sort of thing to happen again."

In the incident ten years ago, I was stabbed in the stomach by an enemy, and collapsed.
Luckily, the mana sleeping inside me was transmitted through the man's weapon which burnt the man completely, saving us.
Had that not happened, I would've probably lost my life at that time. Achille is worried about that.
After it happened, I bawled right before his eyes, after all…

"Got it… I'll be careful."

I replied obediently. It's my fault that he's a worrier, after all.
Achille looked at me with suspicious eyes, but was satisfied for now.
I sure don't have any trust, huh…

※

Whilst chasing the light, we passed through a hallway with nobody in it, and went up a flight of stone stairs.
We've all braced ourselves so that we'd be okay with enemies appearing at any time.
Just as I was about to reach the next floor, an arrow came from above.
After I put up a magic shield, Achille fired magic at the offender.
Oohh, we made a good combo!
But from what happened just now, it seems they're planning to ambush us… We continued up the stairs, even more vigilant than before.

"Camille…"

Achille suddenly pulled my arm.

"Wa-… -sounds of balancing herself-[1] What's up, Achille?"

"Look below you."

I turned my gaze to my feet just like Achille told me to. Right in front of me was a transparent thread spread out.
You wouldn't see it unless you looked carefully, it but seems it was a trap. If you moved the thread, the trap would probably activate. That was close.

"Achille, thank you…"

I honestly told him my thanks. It would be unbearable if there were more traps.
I created magical blades of wind, and fired them up ahead.

With a snapping noise, each thread was cut, and a rain of arrows and axes and pitfalls and the like appeared.
Honestly… I'm glad that I didn't get caught in them.

“Scary…”

We advanced while avoiding traps. It would be no joke to get caught in one of these.
I’m timid now because of the traps from before, so my whole body is shielded as I fly on my quill through the air.
After passing through the area with traps, as expected, we found guards in wait.

There were roughly fifty in the hall and thirty in hiding; just how many soldiers is this guy employing?
The signs of wrongdoing are overwhelming.

“Where’s Royce-sama!?”

I charged towards the enemy, quill and all.

Translator Notes

1. -sounds of balancing herself- is her going “Tottotto.”

Chapter 17 - Q of Hearts (Part 2)

Raiga swung his sword with violent intensity.
You understand once you see this, but he's strong. He might be as good as the guards in the castle, or maybe even better.
What he's using is a sword imbued with magic. As expected of royalty, they have nice things. His sword is a special one that blocks magic, and can tear through magical barriers. …The things called 'magic items' are troublesome stuff.
I'm really glad that I didn't make an enemy out of Raiga!

Flying the quill around, I fired wind magic as I toyed with the enemies. The men who were sent flying by the wind collided with the wall and lost consciousness.
So that I wouldn't burn down the mansion, I held back on ignition type magic.
Even I consider that much.
Losing unexpectedly, the enemies were brought down by Achille with certainty.
Probably because he wanted their statements as evidence later, Achille encased them all in ice. It was a magic that would return the people inside back to normal, once you thawed the ice.

Unlike ten years ago, I could feel us making progress. I could even feel that we had leeway.
We've grown. Both Achille and I.

All too easily, we suppressed the forces in the hall.
Probably because they were hired soldiers, once they lost leadership, their strength also varied. They weren't professionals who had undergone training. That was also one of the reasons we won.

"Let's hurry up and chase the lights."

Raiga hurried on ahead. We nodded and were about to follow him… But.
In the hall, the lights that had up until now been together went two separate ways.
The light that showed Mei's location continued straight ahead, whilst the light for Royce-sama was wandering about in the centre of the hall.
It seemed that Royce-sama and Mei were in different places in this mansion.

"Raiga-sama…"

If you asked me who I would be going after, then Achille and I prioritised Royce-sama.

"It's fine, you two came here for that, right? Royce is here too, huh… I'm going to go after Mei."

"Sorry. We'll be going after Royce-sama, it seems."

Since arriving in this room, the light that was chasing Royce-sama had become a little unstable.
Wandering this way or that way, heading towards the floor…

"It's weird huh, this odd movement. It's heading towards the floor.

"His Highness may be moving around, perhaps."

If Royce-sama is being moved, then we have to hurry.
Thinking that, after taking a step towards the light, my foot stepped on something. I heard a 'click' sound.

"Eh…"

“Camille!”

Achille called my name in a panic, but it was already too late.
A hole suddenly opened up at my feet.

“Gyahhh! Another traaap!?”

I was sucked into the pitch black hole.
I shut my eyes in terror. I absolutely hate confined places, and dark places.

“I’m falling!”

It’s over, I’m just going to hit the ground. I didn’t have the composure to manipulate gravity to lighten myself. It’s already too late.
I wonder just how well the automatic defence tattoos will work… Or so I was thinking, when something caught my body.
After making a revolution in the air, I fell with a thud.
There’s no pain. In excange, I can feel something like fabric on my skin.

I slowly opened my eyes, and what I saw was… bright blue.

“Achille!?”

What I fell on, was Achille.
The moment I fell down the hole, he’d probably fallen in with me to protect me… He’s good at looking after people, so he’s liable to do it.
My god! Even though the blunder was mine! Even though there was no absolutely no need to become a sacrifice for the sake of someone like me!

“Achille, Achille!”

What do I do, even when I call him and shake him, there’s no response.

“Achille, get up…”

Even still, he’s not moving, and is showing no signs of opening his eyes.
Because of me. W-W-W-W-W-What do I do?
For now, I’ll try spamming my strongest healing magic. It’s something that uses no trifling amount of magic power, but Achille’s life is more important.
Even if I collapse from mana exhaustion, if it saves Achille then it doesn’t matter.

“Achille, get up. I don’t want you to diee!”

“…-, Camille.”

“Achille?”

Achille’s expression changed. After that, he opened his eyes, and I could see his beautiful cobalt pupils.

“You don’t have to make such a tragic expression, you know. I just got hit… You’ve already healed it, so I’m fine already, though.”

“You’re really honestly okay? You’re not forcing yourself?”

“I’m not. I immediately used magic to reduce the impact, after all. I should be asking you. Firing away advanced recovery magic for something like that… Are you okay? Can you stand?”

Speaking of which, I’m still on top of Achille.
I tried to stand in a fluster, but just as Achille said, the mana consumption was too great, and I was lightheaded from the response, so I fell right back down on top of him.
This time alone, it seems that my mana economising tattoos didn’t have much use.

“Uu… S-, Sorry.”

Even when I propped myself up with my arms and tried to raise my body, I couldn’t find the power.

“Honestly, you really don’t think about consequences.”

Still on the ground with me on top of him, Achille embraced me, and then rolled a half-turn.

“Wha-…”

Before I knew it, I was squished under Achille, in a position like I was being pushed down.
This is bad, my heart’s starting to go thumpthump. I really, have no resistance against Achille.

“Umm… Achille?”

“Magic power. You’re out, right? I’ll give you some, so sit still.”

“G-, Giving magic power… not through a potion, but directly?”

“Giving it directly recovers it more quickly, right? The potions I have with me right now are all weak ones.”

When you run out of magic power, besides recovering through potions, it’s primitive, but there are also methods to transfer magic power from person to person.
The method being what it is, there are few amongst magicians who will actually put it into practice, though…

Transferring magic power from the insides of one person to another… In other words, orally. Kissing.
……Kissing!?

“Ah-, Achille, wai-…”

But I wasn’t allowed to speak to the end.
In a position where I was being pushed down, slowly coming down on me, my lips were stolen by Achille.

“Nn… Nnnn-”

Hang on! Unlike last time, isn’t this time a little bold? If it’s mana transfer, is there any need to suck on each other’s lips like this?
Achille’s tongue ran along the lip of my lips, and I unconsciously parted the lips that had been shut until now.
Achille didn’t overlook this chance. A tongue entered my mouth and forced my lips apart, and mana

flowed in.

While this was happening, I could feel Achille's mana flowing into me. Little by little, the power in my body returned.

I recovered my magic power, but it feels like something else has been considerably worn down.
But, is my dizziness gone now, perhaps?

But I wonder why. Achille is showing no signs of getting off me.
Clad in this amorous atmosphere, he's gazing at me.

"Umm, could you move a little…"

"Shall I have you recover mana for a little longer?"

After saying that, with his amourousness increasing, Achille's face drew near a second time…

"Ahh, ahem ahem. Could you possibly leave it at that, you two? If any more of that stuff happens before my eyes, I'll be troubled for a reaction. Also, Achille, please don't forget that this is enemy territory."

"I know that."

Turning in the direction of the familiar voice that suddenly rang out, Achille replied. Using that chance, I crawled out from under Achille.

"Royce-sama~!"

The owner of the voice was the person we had been looking for.
I can't believe it, that Royce-sama would just be normally in front of my eyes like this…
He's safe, he's sound. I'm really so glad.

"I'm glad that you two are both safe as well. I believed that you two would come for me."

"Isn't that a given!? We wouldn't leave you by yourself in such a place, you know."

I declared reassuringly.

"By the way, Your Highness. Why were you wandering about in such a place? I was sure that you would be chained up somewhere…"

Achille asked Royce-sama. Mn, I've been wondering that too.

"Originally I was shut up in a jail cell, but because I heard an explosion outside, I made a break for it. Because the guard was getting slack, I easily escaped. I guess that nobody thought the sheltered prince would do something like a jail break, huh."

He seems extremely satisfied, having stolen a march on the enemy.

"Well then, what shall we do?"

Normally we would now bring Royce-sama outside and complete our duties.
Achille already contacted the castle, so even if we leave them alone, soldiers from the castle will arrest the abductors.

However, right now Mei is here too. I'm sure she was captured as well.

Right now, Raiga is heading to save her.

"Going to save Mei Zakro, right?"

"Royce-sama, why do you know…"

"I heard one of the guards on watch speaking about bringing her here. The criminal is an ambitious count, so I understand his aim."

"He's probably starting going on about how he'll hand the throne over to the Royal Prince, huh."

"Yeah… Alright, let's go save Mei Zakro!"

"Royce-sama? …Is that alright?"

I was shocked at Royce-sama's response.
Even I thought that he would say something about leaving it to the soldiers.

"Don't you think that if we buy some favours now, things'll be fun later on?"

Royce-sama said something like what Achille would.
Why do I get the feeling that his personality is slipping in a weird direction.

"Camille, is your magic power okay now? Did Achille give you lots and lots?"

"Ah-… Yes. I'm absolutely fine!"

I'm afraid about what Achille who's next to me would do, if I said that I didn't have enough.

"It's about the guy who aimed for me, but he was an abnormally strong guy… And I get the feeling that I've seen him before, huh."

"In other words, the culprit is an acquaintance?"

"Might be. If we question the mastermind, I'm sure we'll find out."

We once again made for the top floor.

※

I created another light for searching for Mei-chan.
The light continued straight down the basement hallway, before going up the stairs.
Halfway up the stairs, another arrow came, but they were all blocked by Achille. Achille's magic is exact, and wastes little.

"Camille, make sure you don't waste too much magic power… Even if we say that you recovered, you're not in your normal condition, right?"

"Uu… Are you okay, Achille? You did give me mana."

“I’m still completely fine. If you want more, say so at any time.”

He used a flirtatious sidelong glance just now! Foul play!
My heart rate and breathing were a mess, so I averted my eyes in a panic. This is bad for my heart…

Advancing together like this let me understand that Royce-sama was also quite a war potential.
He wasn’t specialised in fighting the same way Raiga was, but he was quite adept with magic too, and rather than holding us back, on the contrary he contributed a lot.
Also, finding enemies in hiding, or finding traps and the like seemed to be his specialty as well. He really is too reliable.
Just because we spent so much time together, when it came to combat even our breathing was perfectly in sync.
With us three together, aren’t we quite amazing?

“But still, you two have sure gotten close like engaged couples are supposed to be, huh. I’m relieved as well, you know.”

“Wha-…”

Royce-sama suddenly brought us up.
He probably completely saw all of that mana transfer from earlier. I couldn’t sense his presence in the slightest though…

“It seems that Camille has finally graduated from idealising me by overlapping some other person onto me, so I’m glad.”

Royce-sama continued.

“Idealised?”

“You weren’t aware of it yourself? You’ve been looking at me, but not really, you know? Through me, you’ve been looking at someone else, right? Or maybe it was that you were comparing me to somebody else.”

“That’s…”

“Originally I was wondering if you perhaps had an interest in me, but I immediately realised that that wasn’t it.”

“Royce-sama…”

Looking at somebody else through Royce-sama… I had no intention of doing anything like that, but…
What does he mean?
Just who is he saying that I overlapped onto him?
While I was holding confused feelings about this, we arrived before the door of the room Mei was probably in.
I timidly placed my hand on the door.

Chapter 18 - Q of Hearts (Part 3)

I opened the door.
The scene before my eyes dumbfounded me for a moment.

“What is this?”

In the middle of the room were burly men, and again, a huge number of them.
Unlike the lot below, these guys seemed quite skilled. Mei was crouching in the corner of the room.
And fighting while protecting her was…

“Kai?”

Eh-… Why is he in here? Even though he should have gone missing after leaving the castle.

Opposite them was a fat, middle-aged noble and a dressed up noble’s daughter standing there spectating.
Ahh, if I rememeber correctly, he’s Ti… Ti- what again?
Count Ti something or other.
Hm? But the noble daughter is for some reason looking towards the intruding Raiga with a paled face.

Raiga is surrounded by the burly men in combat.
I’m glad that he made it to Mei safely.

“Raiga-samaa, people have come to help!”

“Look after Mei’s wounds for me! She got done in by them!”

Is that the first thing you say to me?

“Roger!”

I ran towards Mei. Kai is kind of glaring at me…

“I won’t do any harm to Mei, you know.”

Thinking about it, Kai has looked at me with suspicious eyes since the beginning, huhh.

I promptly crouched down by Mei and started treating her.
I carefully use healing magic so that it doesn’t end up like the time with Achille.

“How cruel.”

To injure a gentle girl like Mei to this extent.
I could see things like the signs of a beating, and claw marks.
To scratch her like this, no matter how you look at it, the one who did this was that woman, huh…

“Mei-chan, it’s okay now.”

Mei’s wounds were receding. There probably won’t be scars or anything either. I definitely won’t let something like that happen!

“Oneesama, thank you…”

Despite having her injuries healed, Mei has no energy. Though since she went through something like that, if you ask me if it's natural, then it's natural.

"Royce-sama, this way. Please wait somewhere safe."

I called out to Royce-sama. He was also someone being targeted.

"Being next to you two is the safest."

So stated Royce-sama with a gentle smile… There's a limit to working your subordinates to death, you know.

"…I understand, so please stand back with Meichan. While you're at it, it would be of great help if you cast a shield."

"Mn, leave it to me."

With this, concern about what happens behind me has lowered a great deal.

Again, when I return my sight to Raiga, I find that he's suddenly begun to struggle.
It looks like the enemies have a magician with them.

"Achille."

"Camille, be careful."

In the past, I struggled because of an enemy magician.
But this time, I won't lose.

The enemy had one magician, and turning our way, he fired a spell like an electric shock.
Achille immediately defended.

"What, it looks like he's no big deal."

"Mn, he's not a magician of the castle, is he? I've never seen him at work. Even short on mana, I think I'll be fine."

As a test, I opened up a hole in the floor with magic. So that Raiga and the others didn't get mixed up in it, I aimed for places where the enemies were tightly packed together.
You dared drop me in a hole earlier! Taste the fear of pitfalls!
Because the ground suddenly started disappearing, the enemy were shaken, and fell downstairs without even a scream.
The height of the ceiling backfired on you, huh!
Once again, I closed the holes. A number of them were probably fine, but there seems to be only one door to this room, so…
I decided to aim for the survivors positioned in front of the door. If I did so, then it'd use less magic power, and I'd be fine with a potion.

Because I dropped them downstairs, the number of enemies had fallen by half.
While I was dropping soldiers into a hole, it seems that the magician and his buddies were frozen by Achille, and the remaining enemies were being cut down by the raging Raiga.
Royce-sama was shielding Mei and himself with magic, while binding the count and his daughter with

thorny vines so they wouldn't be able to escape. A prince who really does too good a job.
Those thorny vines are a magic I taught Royce-sama earlier, but is it my imagination that the thorns on his vines seem sharper and more brutal than mine?

Ah, the surviving soldiers have finally returned from downstairs. I've been waiting for you!
To show respect to Count Ti-something's soldiers who faithfully behaved just as planned…

"Shall we have you try going once more? ♪"

Again, a large hole opened up in the ground on which they stood. I wonder how many will come back this time.

Chapter 19 - Q of Hearts (Part 4)

How many times have I already dropped the soldiers into a pitfall?
Not a single man of valour has made it to where I am.

“Camille, how long are you going to play around for?”

Achille brought me in front of the door.
When I saw that the number of icicles had increased, I realised that while I was busy dropping soldiers into holes, the number of Achille’s victims further increased.

“Nnnnn, I’m not playing, you know.”

I raised my voice in protest, but Achille paid it no heed and took my arm.
With my arm still linked with his, we walked to Royce-sama’s side.

“I wonder what we should do with these.”

With sparkling eyes filled with amusement, Royce-sama was watching the count and his daughter who were both coiled up by thorny vines. What a nice smile!

The count had probably struggled quite hard to get out of the vines. His clothes were worn and tattered.
As for his daughter, she had no energy. She’s a girl with a familiar face, but this girl has been acting strangely ever since she saw us entering the room.
Her complexion worsened, and she was fearfully looking in Raiga’s direction.

As for Raiga, because he had burst in here by himself and began fighting, his body was wounded all over. Kai was covered in similarly harsh wounds.
Count, even though Raiga is the son of the Royal Prince, you attacked him? Isn’t that no good…? Even if it was in self-defence, this is overdoing it.
Guess there’s no choice, huh. Shall I heal him?
When I made to heal the two of them, I was stopped by Achille.

“You don’t have much magic power, so I’ll do it.”

“But…”

“Camille, just leave it to Achille.”

For some reason, Royce-sama stopped me with a smirk.
I don’t really get it, but I’ll take Achille up on his offer.

Achille precisely sent off healing magic at a distance. How skilful…
I was looking at Achille with a sidelong gaze, when Royce-sama spoke to me in a quiet voice.

“Achille has a surprisingly strong desire to monopolise you, doesn’t he? He doesn’t want you to treat other men, you know.”

“Eh-…”

I was bewildered by the unexpected response. Is that why he stopped me just now?

It looks like Raiga and Kai's injuries have healed. A smile has returned, just a little, to Mei's face.
Raiga called out to Mei about something, but because they were too far, I couldn't really hear.
Is it a lover's conversation? Or is it asking about the events that led to this?
On the side, Kai is watching the two of them with a dissatisfied expression.

The Spades faction are here in full force, but why is Kai in a place like this…?
I've been having my doubts about that for a while now, but as I thought, I can't really figure it out.
After all, there's also the fact that I feel that he arrived a little too quickly for somebody who found out about danger to his sister by chance.

"So, Count Tito. Is what Mei said true?"

Raiga suddenly spoke to the count.
That's it! It was Count Tito! So vexing! Even though I even recalled as far as 'Ti-'…!

Still wrapped up in the vines, Count Tito shouted.

"Raiga-sama! Why are you getting familiar with those of the King Faction!? You are the son of Royal Prince Kuuga!"

It seems that he's dissatisfied about the fact that Raiga is with us.

"Who I get familiar with is my right. It's nothing to do with you."

"But, they are the enemy!"

"To me, you lot who did this to Mei are more the enemy!"

Raiga glared at them with a furious expression. The daughter began trembling even more.

"It was a plot to separate Mei and I, and have me marry that woman over there, wasn't it? Was turning your blade even towards me because you wanted to capture me weakened and have me move as you pleased?"

With a wicked smile, Raiga approached the count and his daughter.

"That was for your sake…"

"It was for your sake, wasn't it!? Using Royce to depose the king, separating Mei and I… You wanted to turn me, who would be your future son-in-law, into a puppet and seize control, right!?"

"Hii-!"

Raiga's anger wouldn't stop. There's enough momentum that Count Tito will end up killed at this rate.
The cornered count continued giving even more excuses.

"It's that woman! That woman's in the wrong! She whispered something into your ears! She's a spy of the King Faction!"

Count Tito started attacking Mei.
You could tell what a small fry the count was from how he mercilessly attacked only Mei who wasn't resisting.

“That’s enough, okay?”

Suddenly, one of the vines constricting Count Tito rose into the air, and then came down on his butt.

“Higii-”

“Royce-sama?”

The count let out a cry of anguish. It seems that Royce-sama had his own anger about this.

“Well? Who are the others that you’re connected with?”

“Kuu… I have nothing to say to say to you!”

“Really. Even if I do this?”

Another vine came down on him.

R-R-R-Royce-sama, is this an interrogation? Just when did you learn something like that!?

I was panicked. As the thorny whip swung down at the count, Royce-sama questioned him with a smile.
It seems that he’s an expert at it for some reason, but this isn’t something a normal prince does.
The count’s huge bottom was swollen bright red, pants torn.

“At any rate, after having father step down from the throne, you were planning on killing me together with him, right? It’s uninspired, isn’t it? Who did you receive those orders from?”

Frankly speaking, he’s several times scarier than Raiga.

“Or was it something you thought up yourself? Just how did you gather up this many soldiers, I wonderr?”

“Guahh-”

Achille who had noticed that I’d paled subtly pulled me towards him, and blocked my sight with an embrace.

“Royce-sama, let’s leave the rest to the interrogation service. People from the castle should arrive before long.”

“Hmph, guess there’s no choice, huhh.”

Royce-sama looked a little discontented, but he obediently followed Achille’s suggestion.
Being freed from Royce-sama, the count wet his pants in relief, and lost consciousness.

Chapter 20 - Q of Hearts (Part 5)

The most pitiful one, was the count's daughter who remained.
Her face had already gone past pale, and had become white. She did nothing but wholeheartedly gaze in Raiga's direction.

"Raiga, is this young lady one of yours, I wonder?"

Royce-sama who had noticed the girl's gaze asked, and Raiga replied curtly.

"I don't know such a woman."

"R-, Raiga-sama… She's one of the students in the Spades class, you know?"

Mei interjected from the side.

"The count's daughter, Claire Tito is certainly enrolled in our academy, isn't she."

Achille supported her words as well. Achille, for you to even remember students from other classes…

"Raiga-sama… I… was…"

Claire began speaking in a feeble voice.

"There's no worth in listening to somebody like you. Immediately shut that mouth of yours that spews nothing but unpleasantries."

"…-"

Raiga shows no mercy even to the noble daughters of the Royal Prince Faction.
Claire began to shed large tears.

"-… This, cockroach womann-!"

Suddenly, squeezing out a voice that seemed to have crawled out from the bottom of the earth, Claire glared at Mei.
Being father and daughter, it seems that they direct their attacks in the same direction. They blamed Mei, who was the weakest one here.

"Just what kind of things did you say to deceive Raiga-sama!? Why would Raiga-sama, with the likes of you-!?"

Up until just now, I thought she was curling herself up, but she suddenly began spouting abuse at Mei.
I felt something wrong with her lack of consistency.

"Well!? Even though you're a woman who never, ever does anything except hide behind someone else, and gets protected! Why is it you?"

Claire screamed as her hair became violently disheveled.

"I'll kill you! I'll exterminate this cockroach woman again and again! Until Raiga-sama opens his eyes!"

While screaming, her face contorted in ugliness due to the pain of trying to crawl out of the thorny vines.

I walked towards the nobles daughter who was mad with rage.

“Hey, Claire, won’t you calm down a bit?”

“What do you want!? This has nothing to do with you, right!?”

“You’re unhappy about the fact that Raiga-sama and Mei-chan are engaged, right? You like Raiga-sama, right?”

“It’s not something that has anything to do with the Tattoo Woman of the King Faction!”

As planned, the brunt of Claire’s attack switched to me.

“Were you rejected by Raiga-sama?”

“Shut up! Shut up!”

“Did you tell him your feelings?”

“As if you could understand my feelings! He couldn’t even remember my face, even my name! Without even being given a chance to speak to him, he always shook me off annoyedly… I couldn’t even get close to him! In those kind of circumstances, there was no way I could confess, right!?”

“But despite that, before you knew it, Mei-chan and Raiga-sama were engaged…”

“That’s right! Even though I’m overwhelmingly more suitable for him! I can’t forgive that cockroach woman! Even though she just happened to be assigned a job close to Raiga-sama! That’s why I spoke to Otousama, you know, and I asked him to use me in his plan…”

“Are you saying that you knew about Count Tito’s conspiracy from the beginning?”

“No, a certain person told me about it. That father was scheming to overthrow the king, and would soon be putting it into action. When I told Otousama about my plan, he said it was a good idea and happily let me! Otousama would gain power, and I would gain Raiga-sama!”

“Did you think I would love you or something? How stupid.”

Ahh, Raiga retorted from the side.
He should also have a slightly better way of wording things.

“I didn’t think something like that! But if you were close, I’d have chances to talk to you, and someday…”

“Hmph, how worthless. Something like that will be impossible all my life.”

Claire’s eyes widened enough that her large pupils seemed like the could spill out.

“Why… Why that woman…? I would be…”

As though her vigour from before was a lie, Claire’s words suddenly became weak. Her eyes were hollow.

"Could it be…"

Having recalled the symptoms for a certain something, I drew even closer to her. It's not as though I've been reading magic books for show.
I discovered on her neck, a bruise probably given by magic.

"How cruel… Who did this sort of thing?"

"What's wrong, Oneesama?"

From a place far away from me came Mei's concerned question.
Even being subjected to something so frightening, it looks like she was worried about Claire.

There was a curse on the girl's neck. Even if I say curse, it's a kind of magic.
Only, it's not a normal magic, but one that belongs to a type that acts on the mind.

As one of the types of magic that are generally considered unacceptable for use, these magics are referred to as forbidden arts.
In this country, with the exception of certain occupations, the use of mind affecting magic is forbidden by law.
By certain occupations, I mean those such as the interrogation bureau. They have permission to use confession magic only.

"It's likely that she, Claire, has a forbidden art cast on her."

"What did you say!?"

Realising the seriousness of the issue, Mei covered her mouth with her hands.
Royce-sama who was near me asked me a question.

"Camille, you're certain that's a forbidden magic? You can tell what magic it is?"

"Yes, Royce-sama. I've never used it, but if it's just knowledge about it… This is a magic that works on the mind, and primarily amplifies hatred. In ancient times, it was a magic used to increase the morale of soldiers, but in modern times, it is forbidden due to its immorality."

"…Let's leave aside the matter of why Camille knows about forbidden arts. For there to be a person who readily uses curse magic is a grave situation, isn't it."

"…QUITE SO. (monotone)"

I was exposed! I accidentally spilled it out of my mouth!
Books on forbidden arts are strictly managed, and you can only find them in the royal palace and academy in the sections of the archive that are forbidden for reading.
Aahh, even Achille… Don't look at me with those eyess… I just snuck in because I was a little curious, that's all!

"Can you undo it, Camille?"

"I can… but, there's one more forbidden art that even I don't know about, cast on top of it. I'm not sure it would be a good idea to carelessly undo it without understanding it…"

There might be a bad effect on Claire's body due to the backlash.

"That would be troubling, huhh. Camille, I'll give you permission to read the forbidden magic books later, so could you have a scan through them? We'll be bringing the captured count and his daughter to the castle."

"Understood!"

Hooray! To think I'd be able to openly read the magic books in the forbidden section! It's a little imprudent though.
In the meanwhile, Claire continued making a hollow expression.

Chapter 21 - Q of Hearts (Part 6)

Count Tito and Claire were taken away by burly men from the knight order, and the parent and child were put on separate carriages for criminals and carried away.
They would probably be confined in the castle jail for a while, and questioned about various things.
I received Royce-sama's permission to read the forbidden books, and plan to look up on forbidden magic.
If it's the forbidden books in the castle, then a way to undo Claire's magic might be written somewhere.

Royce-sama was heavily, heavily guarded and transported to the castle.
It was after a kidnapping incident, so I guess it couldn't be helped even that he was confined in the carriage…

After knights were dispatched from the castle, Achille and I were quickly removed from Royce-sama's guard. Kiiii! So frustrating!
Even though we were the ones who saved Royce-sama… No, Royce-sama escaped on his own, though.
Because of this and that, right now our job is done, and I'm in the same carriage as Achille.
We're riding this carriage to accompany Royce-sama until he reaches the castle.

Our hours of sleep were cut down, and then we chased after Royce-sama, so riding the rocking carriage like this make me feel like my consciousness is going to leave me.
Even though we have to be prepared for an emergency, so there's no way it'd be okay to fall asleep.

I was nodding off, when suddenly Achille spoke to me.
I'm grateful, since I feel like I'll fall asleep any moment now.

"During the events this time, I've been thinking."

"Nn… Thinking what?"

Probably about the Royal Prince Faction's schemes, or possibly…

"Camille, you consume too much."

It's about me!?

"Certainly this body's consumption rate is bad, and I immediately feel hungry again, but in exchange I have the benefit of not getting fat-"

"Not that, Camille, I'm talking about your magic power. I've been thinking this since I see it from up close, but when you use magic, you spend more than necessary and let off a lot of wasted mana. Like that, you'll suffer mana exhaustion again, you know?"

"Uuu…"

Because I made that kind of failure before his eyes, I can't even refute him.
Also, in truth, there are cases of magicians running out of magic power various times while on the job.
At the time, a companion will have a recovery potion, and they'll make do somehow, but… what Achille is pointing out is for me, something truly difficult to hear.
The mana recovery potions for emergencies that appear on the market have too weak an effect.
Even if you say they're potions for recovering magic power, it's not as if all your magic power will return after drinking it. Even now, an effective mana recovery potions has yet to be created.

That's why Achille is also worried about emergency situations.
Honestly, this childhood friend of mine is really overprotective, huhh.

"I'll try my best to take care. After all, I can't use magic in an efficient way like you can, Achille…"

"Even though your magic knowledge and technique is towering above everyone else, the way you use your magic power is crude, so it's really a waste, isn't it?"

"By the way, isn't there some trick to using magic power efficiently?"

Achille can already perfectly use only the necessary amount of magic power.
It's unbelievable how compact and methodically he can convert magic power into magic. It's enough that I admire him each time.

"It's not that hard, you know? Shall I teach you?"

"Is that really okay?"

Asking Achille to teach me in magic is curious. Even though it's always the other way around.

"Of course. You're always teaching me in magic after all."

"But you teach me schoolwork in exchange, don't you?"

"Well then, we'll do it in addition to studying. I'm worried. Finding out that without knowing it, you even got involved with forbidden arts… It seems like one day you'll do something that you can't take back…"

The fact that I knew about forbidden magic was exposed to Achille as well, wasn't it…
But I'm not that much of an idiot, you know!
Forbidden arts are dangerous. Even if I gain knowledge about it, I won't actually use it you know!

※

Suddenly, Achille closed the distance.
We were in a carriage, so it was cramped, and it was difficult to move about. Inevitably, Achille ended up stuck to me.

"U-, Umm…"

"So, Camille. When am I going to get a reply to my confession? I've been waiting the whole time since then, but…"

"Fue-?"

The very instant I comprehended the contents of what he slowly whispered to me in a sweet voice, I froze.

"The conversation has suddenly jumped way ahead again, huhh…"

Certainly I did get told something confession-like, but I didn't think that a reply would be required.
Mm~mn… What should I do?

"…Camille, are you spacing out? Are you planning on pretending this didn't happen?"

Achille's voice brought me back to my senses. I apologised in a panic.

"Nah, but I mean, I'm your fiancée, so isn't that kind of conversation unnecessary by now? Or so I was thinking."

"Even though I told you my feelings? Are you saying you're fine with a loveless marriage?"

Why did he interpret it like that?

"No, like I was saying, it's not that, umm…"

Is it my imagination that I can feel some sort of pressure from Achille?

"Honestly, I regret mixing up the order. I don't regret getting engaged to you, Camille, but making sure of your feelings first would've been the correct order, huh?"

"Achille…"

Certainly, we got the order backwards. We're in a relationship like that of a political marriage.

But Achille directly told me his feelings. Always, with his words and behaviour.
Compared to that, I use being engaged as an excuse, and always leave it half done.
This attitude… might be a little bit insincere.

"If you stay quiet, I end up misunderstanding it in a way that's convenient for me, you know?"

"Misunderstand?"

"I mean, even when I hug you or kiss you, you don't resist at all, right?"

"…Th-, at's-"

Just because I was surprised and frozen, though…

"I-I-I-If I told you frankly that I was rejecting your confession, what would you do?"

"Then I'd continue putting in more effort until you looked at me. I've already waited ten years, so a little more is nothing, right?"

Ten years…?
In other words, since the time I was six, Achille has liked me… and has been looking at me in that way?
Suddenly, heat started gathering in my face.

"T-, Then what would you do if I accepted?"

"Then it'd be mutual. We'd openly behave like lovers."

I was agonising over it.
I don't dislike Achille. But I don't have any confidence that these feelings are the same as Achille's.
I mean at any rate, including both this life and my first, I've never looked at a member of the opposite

sex in that way even once before.
Even the people I went out with in my old world were people who confessed to me, so it was nothing more than me just going out with them to try.
But…

Achille is always putting off his own convenience, worrying about me, and prioritising my opinions.
There are a lot of times when he teases me, but we trust each other the most.
Or rather, he's basically the only member of the opposite sex.

On top of that…
That time, in the count's secret base when I fell into the hole without a word… Achille jumped into the hole to save me, and even used his body to protect me.

When he was squashed under me and wouldn't move… I was really scared.
When I thought that I might lose him like that, it couldn't be helped that I was really helplessly terrified.
More important than rescuing Royce-sama, more important than making sure Mei was safe, what I did first was use the highest class of recovery magic out of worry for Achille, in spite of running out of mana..

This feeling is…?

"I… do I like you, perhaps?"

"…Even if you ask me, I'm stumped, you know."

Somehow or another, even being hugged by him or kissed by him, I've felt surprised and bewildered, but never angry at him.
I wonder if that's because I didn't dislike it.

The one who's always closest, watching over me, is without a doubt him, after all.

Chapter 22 - J of Hearts

His Highness Royce's kidnapping incident was treated as more or less concluded, and we guarded His Highness to the castle.
We boarded various carriages.
It would be faster to fly on a broom, but because there were a lot of knights who couldn't use magic, we ended up travelling on ground. It seems that the knights all hurried their horses and had come running here. It was probably quite forced.
Because the guards for His Highness on the way back were specialised knights, Camille and I were relieved of our duties.
Because knights had a strong sense of self respect, they wouldn't leave the duty of guarding to we who were nothing more than His Highness's hanger ons.
Even amongst the knights themselves, they were always kicking and fighting for a better position, so it can't be helped I guess. As long as no harm comes to His Highness, I don't really care, but I'm a little worried.
Far from cooperating, Knights also holding each other back… It's a sad thing that they aren't heading in a direction where they try to strengthen each other.
When it comes to my managerial position, I'd like to think that we don't engage in such pointless quarrels.

Camille and I rode in the same carriage.
Count Tito and his daughter Claire were in cells in carriages for prisoners.
The carriages were borrowed from a nearby noble. It would certainly take quite a long time to bring some all the way from the castle.

Camille was starting to doze off in the seat opposite mine. She seems like she'll fall asleep any moment now.
We were allowed to ride a carriage as well, but strictly speaking we're borrowing a carriage. Having Camille ride a carriage in this situation is much too risky.

"Uuu…n"

While moaning for some reason, Camille was frantically trying to keep her eyes open.
It's probably a given that she won't sleep until she knows that Royce-sama has safely arrived at the castle. In that respect, she's been a conscientious one since a long time ago.
Since there's no other choice, I speak to Canille. If I speak to her, she might wake up.

"During the events this time, I've been thinking."

"Nn… Thinking what?"

It seems like Camille's consciousness is returning a little.

"Camille, you consume too much."

She woke up after hearing those words.

"Certainly this body's consumption rate is bad, and I immediately feel hungry again, but in exchange I have the benefit of not getting fat-"

…To say "this body", it's almost like she's talking about somebody else's problem.

"Not that, Camille, I'm talking about your magic power. I've been thinking this since I see it from up close, but when you use magic, you spend more than necessary and let off a lot of wasted mana. Like that, you'll suffer mana exhaustion again, you know?"

"Uuu…"

At the count's mansion, I got injured saving Camille after she blundered.
Seeing that, Camille repeatedly used healing magic before my eyes, but… though she has a lot of power in magic, accompanying that is too much wasteful discharge of magic power. As a result, she suffered mana exhaustion.
Even though she'd normally be able to use more magic, to be unable to utilise her full power because of her magic power shortage when the time came, is too much of a waste.

"I'll try my best to take care. After all, I can't use magic in an efficient way like you can, Achille…"

It's not that you can't do it, but that it's annoying so you simply don't, isn't it?
Camille is sketchy with absolutely everything. You can see it even in the way she uses magic.
Paying no heed to magic power, and firing off huge magic again and again.

"Even though your magic knowledge and technique is towering above everyone else, the way you use your magic power is crude, so it's really a waste, isn't it?"

Camille made a difficult expression.

"By the way, isn't there some trick to using magic power efficiently?"

This is also one of Camille's habits. She immediately starts drifting towards convenient methods.
Trying to gain the maximum effect through the minimum effort can also be taken as a good point, but when it comes to her, her biggest motivation is because she can't be bothered.
She really can't be helped, huhh…

"It's not that hard, you know? Shall I teach you?"

"Is that really okay?"

It's probably unconscious, but when Camille looks at me with those sparkling eyes, it's cute enough to kill.
However, I musn't be fooled by that. When the topic turns to magic, she always makes that face.
I restrained myself.

"Of course. You're always teaching me in magic after all."

The reason I've been improving in magic so quickly is not only because I'm being taught by my father.
It's because Camille always showcases practical and unique modified spells before my eyes as well.
And, because she cheerfully imparts that knowledge onto His Highness and I without reluctance…

"But you teach me schoolwork in exchange, don't you?"

That's nothing more than the fact that if I leave her alone, she won't study at all, so there's no choice but to teach her.
As expected, having the daughter of a marquis stay an idiot would be pretty bad right? Or so I was thinking, so I poked my nose in, and the result was that I ended up in the present situation, stuck with the job of acting like a private tutor. It's also the truth that it's a good excuse to be with her, so I'm fine with

it though.

This time, it'd probably be fine to treat mana control as part of her studies as well. Camille is conscientious only in these regards.

"Well then, we'll do it in addition to studying. I'm worried. Finding out that without knowing it, you even got involved with forbidden arts… It seems like one day you'll do something that you can't take back…"

I'm honestly worried about this.
Before I knew it, in some place I don't know, Camille's been stocking up on knowledge of forbidden arts.
She probably intruded on the royal palace's archive or something on her own.
Even if a door is heavily locked with difficult to dispel magic, she's a lock picking expert who'll easily dispel it. That acts as a good impetus for her to arbitrarily open and close doors in the royal palace, and go in and out of various places.
From now on, I'd better keep an eye on her, or else…
It looks like His Highness will be giving her permission to the forbidden archives, but when she goes, I'll come with her.
Camille always, always, does what she pleases when she's in deserted places…

"…Hahh."

Tired from my one way feelings, I ended up wanting to sooth myself a little.
So I decided to poke at Camille just a little. She's given me plenty of good reactions so far, so she's someone worth poking at.

"So, Camille. When am I going to get a reply to my confession? I've been waiting the whole time since then, but…"

I moved to her side.

"Fue-?"

…What's with that stupid sounding reply? With that, Camille sank into thought about something.

"…Camille, are you spacing out? Are you planning on pretending this didn't happen?"

"Nah, but I mean, I'm your fiancée, so isn't that kind of conversation unnecessary by now? Or so I was thinking."

I wonder if in Camille's mind, just having the title of "being engaged" is enough, and our feelings don't matter.

"Even though I told you my feelings? Are you saying you're fine with a loveless marriage?"

I know what a real political marriage is. My two parents are like that.
My stepmother who gave birth to children out of duty, and desperately tries to have her own child become family head.
My father who, being overwhelmed by that kind of woman, felt that being around her was oppressive, and so went outside to have affairs.
Is it fine even if we become like that?

“No, like I was saying, it’s not that, umm…”

…It’s Camille though, so perhaps there’s a good chance that she’s just not thinking anything.
Or rather, that’s probably the correct answer.

…Is this reaping what I sowed?
Because Camille grew up, and her circumstances changed accordingly, I panicked and used the title of ‘engaged couple’ to keep her surroundings at bay.
All while leaving her feelings behind…
I’m sure that this is the compensation for that.

“Honestly, I regret mixing up the order. I don’t regret getting engaged to you, Camille, but making sure of your feelings first would’ve been the correct order, huh?”

“Achille…”

Her large, raspberry coloured eyes widened.

“If you stay quiet, I end up misunderstanding it in a way that’s convenient for me, you know?”

“Misunderstand?”

“I mean, even when I hug you or kiss you, you don’t resist at all, right?”

“…Th-, at’s-”

Honestly, I think I have a chance.

Lately, Camille has been acting bashful and embarassed a lot around me, after all. Her behaviour is like that of a normal noble’s daughter of her age.
I’m properly being viewed by her as a member of the opposite sex.

“I-I-I-If I told you frankly that I was rejecting your confession, what would you do?”

Camille’s voice was getting agitated and shrill.
That she lets her unrest show like that is adorable, and it’s relieving that I don’t have to read what’s under the surface like with other people.

“Then I’d continue putting in more effort until you looked at me. I’ve already waited ten years, so a little more is nothing, right?”

But, I’ve waited that long already, so Im starting to want a reply… Is what I’m really thinking.
Camille turned bright red.

“T-, Then what would you do if I accepted?”

“Then it’d be mutual. We’d openly behave like lovers.”

“I… do I like you, perhaps?”

…Is that something you’d usually ask me? Would it be okay if I intentionally took that as an affirmative?

“…Even if you ask me, I’m stumped, you know.”

Camille looks like she's fretting about it. Her expressions are rapidly changing about, so I don't get tired of watching her.
I wonder if there'll come a day when she loves me…
I do feel somehow or other that I have a chance, but it might be early for Camille who's still like a little kid. Does this need to take more time…?
While I was worrying about this, I met my eyes with Camille, who surprisingly was suddenly looking hard at me.
It looks like she wants to say something.

"What's wrong?"

"Ah, Achille… Um, you see,"

"Mn?"

"Y-, You see. Umm, that's… ermmmm…"

Whilst fidgeting, Camille began looking into space.
Her preface was too long, but because she was giving her all, I stayed quiet and watched over her.

"I-, I also… might like you. It's surprising when you hug me, but I don't particularly dislike it, after all."

Her voice shrank during the second half, but I heard it all.

"Camille…"

If you tell me that while averting your gaze with all your might, you lose your credibility you know…
But we've known each other for many years, so I understand that she's just earthshakingly embarassed.
The ones who would understand this, are probably… just His Highness and I.

"I said it, okay!? I properly replied, okay!?"

"Seems so."

"With this, this conversation is fini-…"

"With this, we're openly in love with each other, huh!"

Our levels of enthusiasm are a little different, but we can deal with that step by step…
And, I have no intention of letting the conversation finish like this.
I finally got a chance to hear the words I've been longing for from Camille's mouth, after all.

"You, like me?"

"Like I said, I've already said it, haven't I!?"

"Do you like me?"

"…I, I like you."

As usual she's averting her gaze with all she has, but her face is as red as a boiled octopus, so she's probably saying this from the heart.

“Well then, can we kiss?”

“GUFUO-! Geho, gohoh-”

Why did she choke there?
…It’s Camille, so I guess it can’t be helped, huh? Honestly, she really is an expert at destroying the mood.
I love that kind of Camille even so, so there’s no way I can be shaken by this degree of coughing.
I’m prepared to accept her no matter how she is. It’s been ten years now, after all.

My first move is… interpreting that coughing as an ‘okay’, you know.

“I see, I see. So it’s okay, huh. Well then, I won’t hold back.”

“GEHO, GEHO-! Eh? Achille, I haven’t said a thing ye-… Nnnnnn-!”

Even though her mouth says various of things, when I actually kiss her, she goes docile. She says that it’s just being frozen from shock, though. There’s no real resistance either.
When it comes to her, if she really didn’t like it, on top of going on a rampage, she’d even start go berserk with magic, after all.

“Nn, Camille… so cute.”

“Hyaa-…! Nn-, Achille.”

Right now, there’s nobody but Camille and I in the carriage, and His Highness the peeping expert is under close guard and can’t freely move about.

Going by the speed of our carriage, we might reach the castle around noon tomorrow, huh…?
Knights who came to pick up His Highness, good job!

Chapter 23 - Q of Hearts (Part 7)

"Huhu, I'm glad, Camille. You and Achille like each other, right?"

I get the feeling that information gets leaked to Royce-sama, each and every time. How mysterious.
Did Achille tell him about it?
No matter how good it is, even Royce-sama would find it impossible to actually peep on what happened inside the carriage.

Having returned to the castle, right now I'm having tea with Royce-sama who's finished dealing with the post-processing of the incident. Achille was apparently busy with work or something, so he isn't here.
The tea I have in Royce-sama's room is very delicious, and each time it feels like I've gained a little something for free. Today's black tea is exquisite as well.

"I'm glad… you say? You are, Royce-sama?"

"Of course. The two of you are my important friends, after all… That you two are openly in love with each other feels like a load off my back, you know."

"…Was there some sort of burden that you had in regards to this, Royce-sama?"

"There was, you know. You were having trouble graduating from me, after all. I got watched pretty badly by Achille…"

Achille? He did that sort of thing?

"G-, Graduate, you say…?"

Speaking of which, at the count's hideout he said the same thing as well, but… Just what does he mean?

"I said it earlier, right? That you overlapped me with somebody else, and adored them through me. For a long time now, I've always been wondering about it, but am I really that similar to that person…?"

"Something like overlapping somebody similar to you, I wouldn't do…"

Having thought that far, it suddenly hit me. Could it be…

Just one person, comes to mind.
He's incredibly similar him… But, I'm certain that he's different to the one that's before my eyes in real life.

"It couldn't be…"

Is the person that Royce-sama talked about, the in-game him?

I unconsciously, unwittingly, overlapped and compared Royce-sama with the in-game him…?
While I was aware that this world was real, I looked for points that were similar with the game's characters, and without realising it myself, compared them.

What I've been holding onto for these ten years, were love for the game's Royce… No, a yearning for him. I sended up stacking those feelings onto the real him.
And Royce-sama who's good at reading other's feelings, has probably always noticed this.

“Royce-sama… I,”

What a rude attitude I’ve taken towards him for almost ten years. Instead of the real person, I’ve been yearning for a fake existence of my own convenience.

“Camille, did you like that person?”

“…No, rather than love, it was just yearning, I think. I understood that being with them was impossible, after all.”

I mean, it was a game character. And someone completely different from the current Royce-sama.

“I see…”

Royce-sama gazed at me.

“I’m sorry. It must have been uncomfortable, right? To have an imaginary person like that overlapped onto you for so long…”

I’d definitely hate it. To be seen through the filter of the in-game Camille.

However, inexpectedly, Royce-sama shook his head.

“That’s not true. The fact that you’ve always been by me, and protected me, is because of that imaginary guy after all.”

“Royce-sama… You’re too kind.”

What a magnanimous prince.
Accepting even me, who was holding onto selfish delusions, and always keeping me as a friend.

“From now on as well, I intend to protect you, Royce-sama. Because you’re my friend, and an older brotherly, or perhaps younger brotherly… important person to me.”

Royce-sama softly smiled. Even now, after he’s grown up, that smile is still the same as always.

“Me too. You’re my important friend, and though older sister is impossible… I think of you like a little sister, you know.”

He just declared that ‘older sister’ was impossible for meee!

※

After my chat with Royce-sama, I turned up to work for the first time in a while and was discovered by Achille, and he speedily walked towards me. Has he already finished work or something?
He stopped in front of my eyes, and with a grave expression, placed his hands on my two shoulders.

Since that incident in the carriage, I feel that the sense of distance between us has shrunk again.
It seems that Achille is completely in boyfriend mode. He’s been treating me even more protectively than before… I can’t get used to being treated like this, and it’s embarassing.

“Achille, what’s wrong? You’re making such a serious expression.”

“Who’s the person that you yearn for?”

“Yearn for? Ah-, could it be…!”

Achille… Didn’t you hear about this too quickly?
Even though I only just told Royce-sama, what a formidable guy.

Maybe Royce-sama and Achille don’t hide anything from each other. The friendship between men is a mystery.
But still, Royce-sama, you’re too loose-lipped… Even though you’re a prince.

I’d decided that I would also tell Achille the truth.
I-, It’s not perfect, but we are lovers, so I’d like to avoid weird misunderstandings.

“…I’ve said this to Royce-sama too, but it’s not a person that exists in reality, you know.”

Ah, he’s giving me a weird look. I might look like a cringeworthy woman right now.

“What kind of person are they?”

“Mnnnn, an ideal prince. He’s a little bit like Royce-sama, but… As expected, I’ve understood that they aren’t the same.”

“Hmmn… I wonder if it’s like the princes on white steeds that Déborah and Désirée have spoken to me about. Girls seem to like those types of stories, don’t they?”

“R-, rightright! He’s like that! An existence you yearn for!”

It’s a little different, but the point about being a prince that you yearn for is the same, so I’ll just go with this. If I don’t, it seems like things will get complicated.

Achille didn’t look like he was accepting it, but it looks like he’ll spare me more questioning, which saved me.

“Then, you really do like me back, right?”

“Mmn…”

When he asks me face to face, I get shy no matter what, and end up being stiff.

“Other people that you long for…”

“D-, Didn’t I say that there aren’t any!?”

No good, I was panicked and accidentally let out a bit of a loud voice. So embarassing.

“Really? You won’t cheat on me?”

“I said that I won’t, geez!”

To begin with, since it was the imaginary Royce-sama from the game, it’d be impossible to cheat

anyway.
Achille… Surprisingly, I'm sort of seeing elements of a possessive boyfriend just under the surface, you know.

"You should know it too, right? I don't have someone like th-… Ah-!?"

When I glared at Achille and was trying to refute him, I saw from over his shoulders a pair of blue eyes, sneakily watching us from a corner of the hallway.
It seems that Achille noticed the presence behind him as well, and turned around.

"Wh-… Royce-sama, what are you doing spying from the shadows!? Do you have business in the Magic Building?"

Even though he should have been resting in his room until just a moment ago. Honestly, he's a prince you can't let your guard down around.

"No, I was just watching over you two. I want to use you guys as a reference later, okay?"

I'm hugely questioning what exactly he plans on using this as a reference for.

"Not, 'okay?'! Even though you're a prince, aren't your information gathering skills getting too good? Why was there no hint of your presence!?"

Achille tsukkomi'd Royce-sama. But, I also don't think that Royce-sama's presence erasing abilities are ordinary.
…But still, we sure showed him something embarassing, huhh.

Looking at the three of us together like this, I start to think that we've grown quite a lot since that time.
Each of us, in different directions.
The first time we met, we chatted in this Magic Building as well, huhh… Our personalities were completely different though.

Now, Achille is using his genius intellect in his job, and is going fullspeed down the path to becoming an elite.
The competence that he had when he was Royce-sama's right hand man in the game was plenty as well, I think. The calculating side of him that was laid bare when he was a child has also calmed down, but he's good at hiding what he doesn't want to show, so I have no idea what he's actually thinking though.
Royce-sama was originally a prince whose kindness was his only merit, but lately, perhaps due to Achille's influence, occasionally he shows a highly calculating side of him.
Also, he erases his presence and moves about stealthily like a ninja, so it seems that he's making various secret manoeuvres in places I don't know about. I'm sure he's already got a hold of my weaknesses. A secret intelligence-type prince… He's ended up growing in a surprising direction, huhh…

I'm developing in the direction that I originally aimed for, and became a professional magician who's mastering magic.
Right now I'm a student, as well as a "Red" magician, but in the future I plan on becoming a "Black" magician who can guard Royce-sama.
I've also g-, gotten Achille as a fiancé and lover… so my future as the daughter of a marquis also seems stable for now.
To think that I'd end up in this kind of relationship with that Achille… I wouldn't have thought it when I first came to this world, huhh. The world is a mysterious thing.
But this world isn't a game; it's reality. Achille, and Royce… and I as well, are people living in reality.
Through our choices, the future is something that changes unendingly.

Credits

Author	—	(桜　あげは) Sakura Ageha
Publication platfom	—	Honto.jp
Publisher	—	(レジーナブックス) Regina books
Translator	—	The Esteemed 5th Holy Sheeprabbit, Estelion Sharlulu Asheel Vinchance Celenalia di ef Falufiluu'Luufilaafee (The 35th)
Book designer	—	Armaell

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